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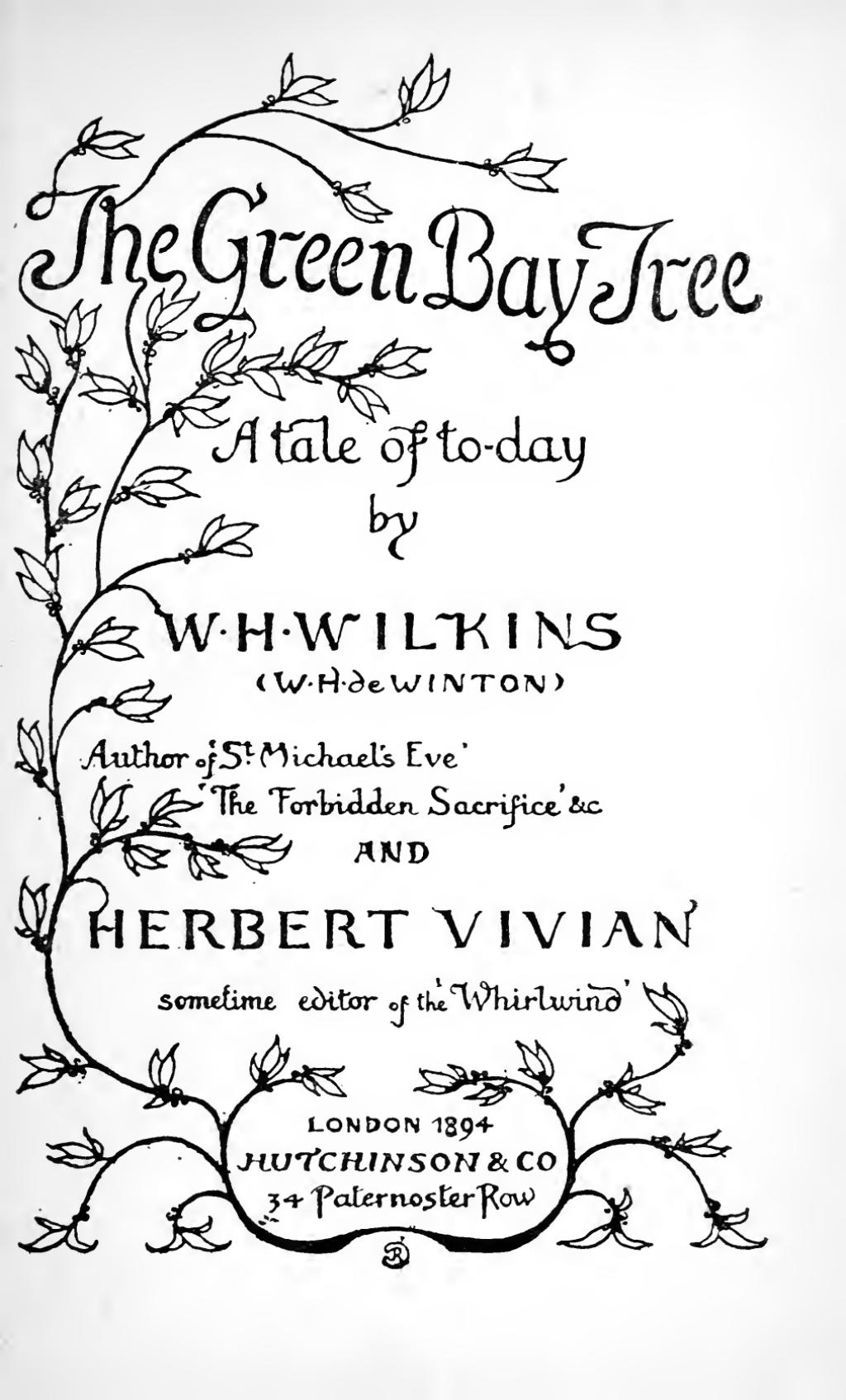
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THE GREEN BAY TREE

VOL. I

*Difficile est
Satiram non scribere.*



The Green Bay Tree

A tale of to-day

by

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'The Forbidden Sacrifice' &c

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P R E F A C E

“I myself have seen the ungodly in great power: and flourishing like a green bay-tree.”

PSALM XXXVII. v. 36.

Prayer-book version.

“They come in no misfortune like other folk: neither are
they plagued like other men.”

“Lo, these are the ungodly, these prosper in the world, and
these have riches in possession.”

PSALM LXXIII. v. 5 & v. 12.

Prayer-book version.

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PREFATORY NOTE

Chapters I, V, X, XI, XII, XIII; paragraphs 1—8 and 11—58 of Chapter IV; paragraphs 1—36 and 45—50 of Chapter VIII, and paragraphs 1—11 and 21—30 of Chapter IX are written by MR. W. H. WILKINS.

Chapters II, III, VI, VII, XIV; paragraphs 9—10 and 59—126 of Chapter IV; paragraphs 37—44 of Chapter VIII, and paragraphs 12—20 of Chapter IX are written by MR. HERBERT VIVIAN.

THE GREEN BAY TREE.

CHAPTER I.

HIS BEST FRIEND.

The two greatest stimulants in the world
are youth and debt.

—B. DISRAELI: *Tancred*.

WHEN the Right Honourable Spencer Coryton lay a-dying, he beckoned his son to his bed-side and whispered,

“Remember always that your best friend is yourself.”

The next morning the city of Bristol had lost its senior Parliamentary representative, and the post of Judge-Advocate General was vacant.

Walpole Coryton pondered much over his father’s

words, and the more he thought over them the more did they commend themselves to him. The late Judge-Advocate General had certainly illustrated his theory by his example. Taken as a whole his had been a fortunate life, and he had himself to thank that it had been so. He was a self-made man, who owed most of the good things which had come in his way to his own cool head and his absolute indifference to the feelings of others. A scholarship had carried him from a Yorkshire grammar school to one of the smaller Oxford colleges and, when there, his wits had done the rest. He took his degree, was called to the Bar and, with a little money in hand, went on the Western Circuit. He picked up a brief or two, now and then a good one, did a little 'devilling,' and bided his time.

He might have bided a very long time, had not great good fortune thrown him in the way of the worthy Miss Graves at a Clifton Subscrip-

tion Ball. Miss Graves was the orphan daughter and heiress of a Bristol mustard-maker, who might have died a millionaire, the Bristol people said, if he had lived a little longer. But he did not and so his daughter was left only comfortably off. Still, Miss Graves was rich enough to live in a commodious villa overlooking the breezy Clifton downs, to drive a gaudy yellow chariot known in the neighbourhood as the mustard pot, to subscribe liberally to the local charities, and to keep a 'sheep-dog', as Becky Sharp would say, for propriety's sake—in this case an elderly spinster cousin.

Miss Graves was not without aspirations, if short of aspirates. She had a soul above mustard, and deliberately avoided the smelly old Redcliffe-street, where all her money had been made; she had a soul, too, above the gilded youth of Bristol and Clifton 'society' who, it must be confessed, were for the most part decidedly provincial in their

manners and their bearing. She was a woman of correct principles and correspondingly stupid. She occupied sittings—well to the front—at the Evangelical Church of St. Jude's and was thought very highly of by the parochial clergy. Probably she would have ended by marrying one of them—fifty per cent. of the daughters of the well-to-do Bristol merchants marry clergymen, it is so 'genteel'—had not fate thrown her across the path of that good-looking young barrister, Spencer Coryton.

Spencer Coryton saw his opportunity and made the most of it. Things were going rather hardly with him just then and time did not permit of a protracted wooing. The lover was arduous, the lady was not coy. He ascertained her nett market value. On the credit side, there was a little over two thousand a year; to her debit were the facts that she was plain and past her first bloom. She was, in short, like home-made bread, heavy but wholesome. But then he had nothing at all, expect

his good looks, his glib tongue, and his bright brains. Brains were not quite so much at a discount then as they are now. The market was not so overstocked. Now all the young men are so very clever that a stupid one is quite at a premium. But this in parenthesis.

Spencer Coryton thought it over and the lady thought it over, that is to say he thought it over for her, for her mind was receptive and not readily given to new ideas. So Miss Graves very decorously 'fell in love.' She was dazzled by the brilliancy of this young barrister, his conversation opened a new vista upon her limited horizon. She began to think that to be a barrister's wife would be quite as 'genteel' as to be the wife of a clergyman, and to be the wife of a Member of Parliament—for he had confided to her his ambitious dreams—almost aristocratic. Within a few months of their first meeting at the Clifton Ball these two were wed.

Two thousand a year is only two thousand a year after all, though it assumes different aspects from the point of view one looks at it. It does not go far, if one has large ideas. Spencer Coryton had large ideas, though he had been taught by experience how to make one sovereign do the work of two better than most men, and his wife, with her inherited commercial instinct, could almost make one do the work of three. Her stupidity was only with regard to abstract ideas; such concrete matters as butchers' and bakers' bills she grasped with remarkable quickness.

Within a year or two of his marriage, through his wife's local connection and influence—her father had been an Alderman and Mayor of his native city—Spencer Coryton entered Parliament as one of the Conservative Members for Bristol and, when once he was in, he was not turned out again. With the magic letters M.P. added to his name, the Member for Bristol contrived, by 'guinea-

pigging,' floating Companies, and other means known to impecunious Members of Parliament, to add materially to his income. Still appearances had to be kept up—more was required of public men in those days than now—and it required very careful management to make both ends meet.

So long as Mrs. Coryton lived, they did meet somehow, but when she died some ten years after their marriage, leaving her husband with an only son, he gave himself wider scope and, on the principle that, as one can only live once, one may as well enjoy oneself, he began to dip into his capital.

It was not all enjoyment, though, for, like many other astute men, he speculated and, despite astuteness, lost. He was far too much mixed up with bubble companies not to be bitten with the gambling mania. Still, taking his life as a whole, and looking at it from a purely selfish point of view, it cannot be denied that he got a good deal of enjoyment out of it.

He rented a well-appointed little house in St. James's-place—which in those days was not so much given over to the lodging-house fiend as it is now—one of the little houses which cast a backward glance over the Green Park; he belonged to all the best clubs, he stayed at many of the best country houses, he did a little racing in a gentlemanly way, and he flattered and dined all the wealthy and leading men of his party.

In the party he was known as a useful man, and a ‘useful man’ in politics is generally the one who does the dirty work. He was great in the party Caucus and well known as a popular platform speaker, an astute wire-puller, and one who could trim his sails to the passing wind. His was not the highest form of statesmanship perhaps, but it was very useful to those who worship at the shrine of the Jumping Cat. The conservative leaders were well-disposed towards him, and the Dukes and the moneyed men regarded him with patronizing friend-

ship. When his party at last emerged from the cold shades of Opposition to the sunshine of Office, he was rewarded with the minor post of Judge-Advocate General—so called, say some, because the man who holds it is neither a Judge nor an Advocate nor a General—and there was a Privy Councillorship along with it.

Spencer Coryton swore not loud but deep, for, like all men of his type, he thought himself worthy of Cabinet-office at least. But half a loaf is better than no bread, and he took what was offered in the spirit with which it was given and comforted himself with the thought that this added dignity would stave off his creditors for a while. ‘To him that hath shall be given’ is the rule in political life—and in everything else as well for the matter of that. The new Judge-Advocate General knew this—no one better—and he was far too shrewd a man to flaunt his poverty.

“To be poor is a misfortune, to look poor is

a crime," he would say to himself, as he sat down to breakfast in the dining-room of his cosy little house in St. James's-place, after throwing a heap of unopened bills upon the fire. Half an hour later he would whirl away in his spick-and-span brougham to attend to his official duties, or a board-meeting of some Company of which he was Chairman, or a Committee-Meeting at the House, faultlessly dressed, alert, smiling, as though there were no such things as bills or creditors in the world.

Acting consistently on these lines, he managed to live in luxury and comfort, honoured and envied among men, until the day of his death. What the future might bring, what would happen if any of his many wires became tangled, what might become, after his death, of his only son, then a boy at Harrow, he neither knew nor cared.

"He has his wits as I have mine. Why should I trouble about him, he has never troubled about me," he would probably have said, if anyone had

ventured to remonstrate with him about his son.

But no one remonstrated, for none troubled and none cared.

A chill contracted at a political meeting carried off Spencer Coryton rather suddenly and, when the morning papers announced his death and the *Times* dismissed the late Judge-Advocate General with a brief obituary notice, his friends and acquaintances, who read it at their breakfast-tables, said, "Poor fellow, I wonder who will get his place," and went on with their breakfasts.

That was his requiem—the tribute of his friends. He had not many of them, for a man who goes on the principle that he is himself his best friend, is not likely to be over-blessed with others. And when, a few days later, it ran round the Clubs that he had left his affairs in an embarrassed state, the men who had eaten his dinners shook their heads and remarked sententiously that it was very wrong for a man to live beyond his means and that they

for their part always feared there was something not quite straight about him: he was far too much mixed up with doubtful Companies, etc., etc., and so on through all the other variations of that 'I told you so,' with which wise men of the world are so prone to be wise after the event.

"There is a son, isn't there?" said one or two, "I wonder what will become of him?"

But very few gave more than a passing thought to the youth, who, in the darkened house in St. James's-place, was making personal acquaintance with the world's hardness and meanness.

The 'friends' who had known the dead man best, shunned the house, as though it had been plague-stricken, and most of them now forgot all about him and his son too. But Walpole Coryton and the lawyers unravelled everything between them, and when that was done, the son found that the father had left him nothing but his debts.

It was not exactly a promising state of affairs,

but the younger Coryton was not one to indulge in useless lamentations and vain regrets. An instinct of self-preservation taught him to put a bold face on it and to try to hide as much as possible of the true state of affairs from the world. Things might have been worse, for he discovered that he had £4000, a legacy left him by a cousin of his mother's, the principal of which his father had been unable to touch.

The ideal son would, of course, have sacrificed this to pay his father's debts and gone forth penniless into the world. But Walpole was not an ideal son, he was simply the son of his father and, mindful of his dying advice, he kept the £4000 in his own pocket. He had, in fact, some little debts of his own, but he didn't mean to settle them either, at least if he could help it. The events of the past few weeks had taught him more than ever the value of that touchstone of modern life—ready money.

So the late Judge-Advocate General's affairs settled themselves and both they and he were soon forgotten.

When all was over, Walpole Coryton sat down to survey the situation and to sketch out his plan of campaign.

Matters stood thus: He was to all intents and purposes his own master. The fifteen months or so, which had elapsed since he left Harrow, had been spent abroad. His father had sent him to Heidelberg, ostensibly to learn languages, in reality to get him out of the way. He made an excuse for not sending him to Cambridge or Oxford, the true reason being that he did not feel inclined to give him the money to go.

Walpole Coryton knew this and, when his father's death left him free to choose what to do with his £4000, he resolved to spend part of it on a University education. He would carry out his original intention and go up to Cambridge. He

chose Cambridge, like everything else, for a reason. Upon calculation he found that most of his Harrow friends—certainly those who were most likely to be useful—were there now. Arguing to himself that it is no use having friends unless one can make use of them, he resolved to go up to Cambridge and do so.

Walpole Coryton smelt his destiny, as dogs smell a wolf, and that destiny was political life. He knew all about it—or thought he did—its difficulties, its discouragements, its meanness, its ingratitude, but with him politics were a passion and he resolved to brave all. His father's career, so far from discouraging him, was to be to him as a beacon light, warning him of the pitfalls to avoid—an experience by which he might benefit and in the light of which he meant to succeed where the other had failed. That which had not been possible in the one generation should be accomplished in the next. He had his father's

name—not much it was true—but still it would serve as an introduction to public life. He could not afford to waste any of his little advantages.

His father's last words still rang in his ears: his best friend must be himself. With the son as with the sire self came first, self second and, if there was anything left, self again. He was in fact all self: the God he worshipped was Self. "Nothing," said Mirabeau, "is impossible to the man who believes in himself." If that were true, then young Coryton had already won half his battle, for himself was about all that he did believe in.

Walpole Coryton was just what his inherited instincts and the circumstances of his life had made him, nothing more and nothing less. There is an amiable idea prevalent among some people that we come into the world like a sheet of white paper and that all the ugly blots and smudges and smears which appear upon the surface thereafter are of our own making. But is it so? Is not the paper

often so smeared and warped in the making that it takes a life's work to clean and smooth it—if indeed the marks be not rather accentuated and deepened? We partake of the texture of the clay in which we are moulded, and we have to fight—if we fight at all—not only against ourselves, but against the inherited vices and predilections of those who gave us life. Just as the cripple, the consumptive, the idiot, the diseased of all kinds are handicapped in body from their birth by circumstances over which they have no control, so are many weighed down in mind and hampered in soul by hereditary tendencies, against which they often struggle in vain.

Walpole Coryton was his father's son, with his father's clear head and long sight, and with all his father's selfishness and unscrupulousness intensified by the training he had received. 'As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined' and in this case it had been bent—and bent designedly—into crooked and

tortuous lines. The child was the father of the boy, the boy of the man. The childhood need not be described. Childhood at best is always tedious. What the boyhood was, we must look back a little to see.

CHAPTER II.

HARROW-ON-THE-HILL.

Au commencement de la rie toutes les coupes sont pleines: buvez lentement, si vous voulez qu'il vous reste quelquechose sur le tard. Ne buvez pas trop tôt les vins capiteux, car alors vous ne sauriez plus sentir les saveurs douces et saines.

—PIERRE LOTI.

“SELL for you, Shepheard, you clown. Can't come in. Saw you coming.”

“What, at it already! Look sharp and open. I'll take a hand till lock-up.”

Three youths were playing nap in a room of Mr. Wellesley's house at Harrow on the first day

of term. The air was thick with smoke. Each boy had a cigarette in his mouth and a tumbler of claret and soda by his side. The door had been secured by the simple expedient of thrusting a poker into a hole in the floor just inside the room. The hole had been there beyond the memory of boy and had done duty for many generations of rule-breakers.

“That game of pretending to bar out Shepheard is getting played out,” remarked Harold Gaverigan, the new-comer, as he shook hands all round, “we really must think of something just a little less chestnutty. Last term old Weller came in at least half a dozen times, when the door was barred, and each time we sang out, ‘Go away, Shepheard’, in a way that wasn’t even plausible, and each time he found us four sitting in the most unnatural attitudes on hard chairs round a table with absolutely nothing on it but a titty-bowl. We’re sure to be cobbed at this rate. And just now I heard

Coryton's voice screaming. 'Propose', before I was half way upstairs."

"That was before Pim came in," remarked the boy named, suavely. "The Pigeon and I were just having a gentle flutter at *écarté*."

"In which you began with king and *vol* each game, I wager," Gaverigan replied with a smile. "You should play with me, Pigeon. You know I never do such things. Come on, I'll take a hand."

The poker was replaced, Gaverigan poured himself a glass of cherry-brandy on the sideboard, and the four were soon immersed in their game.

Meanwhile let us take the opportunity of casting a look around the room and its inmates. A single row of pictures ran all round the walls, in weird frames like those at the *Chat Noir*. Some fencing-foils and boxing-gloves suggested active tastes different from those in fashion at Harrow, and an array of hunting-trophies served to suggest—on the principle that 'he may safely lie who comes

from far'---a possible *cultus* of the country gentleman's fetish in place of the cricket-and-football-olatry, which are exacted at public schools. The only solid emblem of physical prowess was an absurd pewter pot, with the words 'House Sack-race' writ large upon it and a collection of quill pens stuck contemptuously inside.

The books were unusually numerous for a boy's room and were arranged with an evident eye to effect. The battered school-books, with the regulation stamp on the edges of the leaves, were in a curtained shelf behind a screen; in a prominent case, opposite the windows, where the light showed up their gilded calf, was a set of school prize-books,—the Bourchier History prize, the Ebrington French prize, and a prize won for an English essay on Cardinal Richelieu; underneath them were scattered, in studied confusion, the books meant to be paraded: Montaigne's Essays, Mill on Liberty, Shelley's works, Disraeli's novels, and Chesterfield's

letters; underneath again, in a locked cupboard, was a naughty collection of yellow-covered novels in two languages.

There was a long box of flowers in the window, chiefly geraniums and heliotrope and some sweet peas, that had been trained to climb the thick wire netting, which cages in Harrow boys as securely as if they were lunatics or linnets. In the panels of what looked like a wardrobe-door were pasted cartoons of political celebrities from *Britain*, a paper which describes itself as the organ of Conservative working men, and apparently attributes to those rare birds vulgar and rudimentary ideas both of art and wit.

Inside this door was the famous Harrow fold-up bed, which is let down on to the floor when required for use and put back in its musty cupboard during the day. These are the beds, in which new boys are popularly supposed to be shut up, head-downwards, every Guy Fawkes' day, and perhaps

were before this desperately mollycoddle age, when bullying has gone out of fashion and boys are allowed to grow up into flabby editions of Mr. Oscar Wilde. The object of this kind of bed is to keep up appearances and conceal the fact that the costly privilege of education at a crack public school does not exempt boys from the poor man's hardship of having to use his bedroom not only to sleep in, but to live in, work in, play in, even take his meals in.

The latter is pressed upon the boys as a privilege, only those in the sixth-form being allowed to have breakfast and tea in their bedrooms and three or four clubbing together in what is called a 'find,' for the organisation of those indigestible feasts. The lower boys take all their food downstairs but, in revenge, they are packed away two, three, and even four together, in little dens scarcely bigger than a saddle-room.

Another rough device served to conceal the

washing arrangements in a similar spirit of pretence and prudery. It was now made to do duty as a side-board, and supported a heavy home-made cake, a syphon, a bottle of claret and a smaller one of cherry-brandy.

On each side of the fire-place was a long, deep wicker chair with soft chintz cushions, which combined great cheapness and undoubted comfort. One was the property of the master of the room, Walpole Coryton, the other that of his bosom friend, Lord Pimlico, who, being only in the upper-fifth, had not a room to himself and, while nominally sharing one on the same landing with Shepheard, had taken to making Coryton's room for all practical purposes his head-quarters.

Walpole Coryton, who was now dealing, had never been known to put himself out one hair's breadth for anybody, and yet somehow everyone was devoted to him. He hadn't such a thing as a scruple about him, but he possessed the cardinal

knack or virtue of never being found out. There were few more popular fellows in the school, and this though he habitually offended all the most deeply rooted prejudices of the place, from shirking football to taking an interest in his work.

The charm about him was that he never resented anything. That was his philosophy. He might have been bullied and tricked and disappointed and he would have turned a smiling face to the smiter, even though he bore malice. But he never was bullied or tricked or disappointed; everything always turned out to him for the best in this best of possible worlds.

There was an element of mischief in his character. He was not precisely cruel but he would announce, with cynical half-truth, that to see other people suffer added a zest to any enjoyment of his own at the time. He said he never enjoyed a blow-out at Paul's or Hance's so much as on a very cold day, with a crowd of very ragged street-boys

flattening their noses enviously at the window. But then again, he would find a pleasure in making those same ragamuffins scramble for pennies as soon as his feast was done.

If he had any antipathy at all, it was for violent exercise. He was a sportsman in a sort of negative way. He liked going to a meet, but would never join in a run; he would get boys to bowl to him on a summer afternoon, but would never join in a game where he might have to field out; he took a somewhat platonic interest in racing and had the reputation of being a gambler, but he only betted or played to win, and was never known to lose his head at cards.

The marvel about him was that he would do the rashest things imaginable and never seem to run the faintest risk. For instance, he would smoke a cigarette openly in his room after the midday dinner, play cards there in the afternoon and dispense cherry-brandy to all his friends at tea-time,

though the discovery of any one of those habits would have entailed a flogging and perhaps degradation from the sixth form; he prepared all his construes with a crib, he got all his mathematics and tedious exercises done for him by other boys, shirked impositions and had even been known to shirk a school or chapel, and yet remained as far above suspicion as a new-laid egg.

He possessed considerable physical beauty with a dash of devilry in it, an arched nose terminating in a point, large dark liquid eyes, a short upper lip, tiny fawn's ears and black wavy hair. He was nearly eighteen and already slight traces of dissipation had formed themselves upon his face,—blue-black pencillings under the eyes and a faint line at the corner of the mouth. It was a face which physiognomists would fancy they could read offhand, but which really served to cloak many unexpected touches of character.

Playing nap there that evening, he looked quite

in his element and might have stepped straight out of one of Caravaggio's pictures.

On the right was Lord Pimlico; beyond him was the Honourable Wilfrid Tyrconnel, commonly called 'the Pigeon,' and on the left was Harold Gaverigan. The first two and Coryton were somewhat profanely known to the house as 'the Trinity' from their inseparable intimacy. Coryton had struck up a friendship with Pimlico, partly because he might be useful and partly because he was amusing, and the two had adopted Tyrconnel simply and solely in order to make him useful. Pimlico was only in the upper-fifth and nominally had breakfast and tea in hall, though practically he made one of the 'find,' or mess, in Coryton's room, which comprised Coryton, Tyrconnel, and Gaverigan.

Lord Pimlico was the son and heir of the Marquis of Southwark—a Cabinet Minister who owned race-horses—and he would some day be a magnate in his county, if not in the kingdom. He was a

wild, dare-devil sort of youth and a great contrast to Coryton, not only from the unlicked, semi-barbarity of his manners, but from the animalism of his emotions. He was muscular and erect, with a bull-dog neck, wolfish teeth that showed when he laughed, projecting eyeballs, short hair, and a pimply face. His voice was harsh, even when he sought to be agreeable, and he had an unpleasant habit of panting in people's faces when he spoke to them.

The Pigeon was also an only son. His father was a *richissime* soap-boiler, who had married the only daughter of the House of Tyrconnel, adopted her name in addition to his own of Simpson, then dropped the Simpson altogether, and finally blossomed out, a year before the events of this chapter, as the brand-new Baron Baltinglass of Blarney. The Pigeon was not altogether a fool—the soap-boiler's blood in his veins took care of that;—it was his singular gentleness of manner and his exaggerated conscientiousness which had earned

him his nickname. He had an unusual regard for truth and had surprised masters by refusing to accept the credit of successes, to which he was not strictly entitled, and boys by the perversity with which he offered himself up as a sacrifice to accept blame and punishment, which a discreet silence would have staved off.

There was one strange vein of character in his composition, probably a stray touch of atavism from the gay roysterers among his mother's Cavalier ancestors, from whom came also the heroism and chivalry of his disposition. Even in his most conscientious moments he had an irresistible craving for excitement. If it led him to break rules, he made no mystery about it and was ready to take the consequences, but excitement he must have at all costs. Coryton and Pimlico provided him with a certain measure of it with cards, and at the same time provided themselves with a welcome addition to their stores of pocket-money. In any

exciting piece of mischief that was on foot he was sure to have a hand.

He was often at issue with authority and that without the scapegrace's best defence—a diplomatic dissimulation. His honesty was in such cases the worst policy and availed nothing to protect him. He was not long in making the discovery that the ecclesiastical theories about virtue and happiness going ever hand in hand are a delusion and a snare. Indeed, the wise men of old were the first to admit it. Throughout the Old Testament there runs a chronic and morose resentment at the very good time indeed enjoyed in this world by the wicked. 'They flourish like a green bay-tree,' 'their eyes swell with fatness, they do even as they list,' it is petulantly exclaimed; and much hot breath is expended in foretelling calamity concerning them. But somehow or other the day of retribution seems strangely slow to dawn and, while the saints are fasting, giving tithes of all they

possess and generally making themselves miserable, the sinners go on getting all the cakes and ale, waxing fat and kicking, and gobbling up the fatted calves. Hildebrand summed up the situation, when he exclaimed cynically upon his death-bed, "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore I die in exile."

The remaining player was Harold Gaverigan—a youth by no means accustomed to be kept waiting. He was the only son of a Cornish country gentleman of ancient lineage, a tall fair boy with childish face and twinkling eyes, but a certain determination of manner that generally got him his own way.

After the game had proceeded for about an hour, the lock-up bell rang. The boys hastily put away their contraband goods, rinsed their mouths with eau-de-cologne and water to remove the tell-tale smell of smoke, and exchanged their tweed coats for the regulation swallow-tails, before going down to answer their names in hall.

Mr. Wellesley went the round, shaking hands with everyone according to the custom of first day of term; the head of the house read through the roll-call; and Mr. Wellesley retired to his study. Before doing so he said in bell-like tones:

“Coryton, Mr. Tyrconnel, * and Gaverigan, I want to speak to you after supper.”

The usual supper, consisting of cold meat, cheese, and swipes, was laid out on the hall-table, but the boys, fresh from better fare at home, showed little inclination to sit down to school-food so soon.

Shepheard and two others alone did so. Shepheard was a heavy good-natured fellow, accustomed to be laughed at all round. Coryton slapped him on the back, as he passed through the hall with his two friends on the way to the house-master’s study.

* It is scarcely necessary to explain, for the benefit of the ignorami, that boys with the title of ‘Honourable’ are called ‘Mr.’ officially at Harrow.

"It was a sell for you, old boy, to-day, wasn't it?" he said playfully.

"What was?" retorted Shepheard, with his mouth full of bread and cheese.

"Why, not being able to get into my room this evening, when we barred you out."

Shepheard gave a grunt of disgust and was about to expostulate, but the three had passed on laughing.

Mr. Wellesley received them with an unusually grave face. It was a face not unlike that of the Duke of Wellington and he was inordinately vain of the resemblance. When he liked, he could look alarmingly severe, but those who knew him well were never afraid of him, for he had the kindest of hearts and rarely punished if he could avoid it.

"Sit down," he said austerely, scarcely looking up from the *Quarterly Review* he was reading.

Coryton with easy indifference ensconced himself at once in a big leather armchair near the window and sat dangling his legs. Tyrconnel, in a rather

constrained manner, took a hard chair, folded his arms and wondered anxiously what was coming. Gaverigan leaned carelessly against a revolving bookcase, resting his forehead on his forefinger and trying to look unconcerned. He always studied his attitudes, and he had seen one something like this in an engraving of Disraeli the younger.

Mr. Wellesley went on reading for nearly five minutes, as if no one were in the room. Presently Gaverigan gave a long cough, obviously intended to express the fact that he was waiting. Mr. Wellesley's eyes lighted up with a grim smile, but otherwise he made not the faintest sign of having heard. Then Coryton, in the most natural voice in the world, asked Tyrconnel from the other side of the room at what time speechroom was next morning. Mr. Wellesley said "Hush," but still did not look up from his book. The boys gave a suppressed titter and relapsed into silence.

At last Mr. Wellesley looked up.

“ I am going to speak to you, boys, on a serious matter,” he said, in clear deliberate tones, “ you must look on what I have to say in the light of a warning. It has come to my knowledge during the holidays—no matter how—that card-playing has been going on in the house. I ask no questions. I do not wish to be told anything”—he added, as Tyrconnel impulsively tried to say something; “ do not interrupt me, Mr. Tyrconnel. It is possible that some of you may know who the culprits are. If so, you will be doing them and me a service by informing them that it must be stopped at once—at once, do you hear? I shall be on the look-out and, if I catch anyone, I shall not have the least hesitation about sending him up to the head-master. I appeal to you, boys, for the good name of the house,—I mean, you can remind your friends that a scandal of this sort would be very unpleasant for us all. Other things have been mentioned to me also. A number of wine-bottles were found in

the orchard. But one warning must cover all delinquencies. If anyone's conscience prick him, let it be a lesson to him for the future. Now you may go."

"I would like to say first, sir," said Coryton in his usual cheerful tones, "that I am quite innocent both of cards and bottles. I suppose you sent for us because you thought we had something to do with it, but I assure you that you are mistaken--at least so far as I am concerned," he added hastily, perceiving that Tyrconnel was about to correct him.

"I believe you, my boy," the master replied, looking into Coryton's frank eyes, which always stood him in good stead even in the worst predicaments; "I am sorry if my suspicions fell on the wrong heads. Too bad, is it not?" he added with a twinkle, "*dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas.*"

"That's one for you, Pigeon," said Gaverigan in a stage whisper, nudging his friend.

“Now run along,” said Mr. Wellesley, “and, Gaverigan,” he added with emphasis, “I advise you to give up those incessant romps and barrings-out with Shepheard. Now you are in the sixth, you must put away childish things. Good-night. Do not forget what I have said to you.”

“You are an amazing chap, Pigeon,” said Coryton at breakfast next morning, recurring to this interview for about the twentieth time, “I really thought at one time you were going to say to old Weller, ‘Yes, sir, it’s quite true, I have a card-party every afternoon between fourth school and lock-up, and those were all my bottles in the orchard!’”

“Of course I was going to tell him. You said we none of us had anything to do with it. I can’t help your lying to save your own skin, but I am not going to give a tacit assent to any lies you may tell about me in my presence.”

“Good old Pigeon!” they all laughed.

“But what were the bottles?” asked Gaverigan.

“ You surely hadn’t drunk all that brandy, Pigeon? ”

“ It wasn’t brandy,” he replied, “ it was that wretched Coryton’s claret-bottles. Before starting for his *execat*, he came to me with a travelling-bag full of bottles and asked me to keep them in my bag till he came back, as I wasn’t going for an *execat*.”

“ Poor Pigeon! Did you ever escape having your ‘ex’ stopped, I wonder? ”

“ So I kept them in my bag till he came back, and then he pretended he knew nothing about them, and I was saddled with the beastly things.”

A roar of laughter greeted this admission.

“ Well, I had to throw them out over the orchard wall from my window at dead of night, and there was a light in Weller’s study at the time and I heard him open his window to see what was up. So perhaps he had his suspicions about me.”

“ Not improbable, I should say,” put in Coryton judicially. “ What puzzles me is how he heard

about the cards. I wonder whether William can have told his father."

"No, William Wellesley isn't a sneak and, besides, he doesn't know."

"I should smile! They all know. And the old man knows more than you imagine," said Gaverigan. "Didn't you hear what he said about barring out Shepheard? But he seemed to believe you, Coryton, when you said you had nothing to do with it."

"Of course. I am accustomed to be believed," said Coryton proudly.

"I suppose we shall all have to turn saints now," put in Tyrconnel tentatively.

"On the contrary," replied Coryton, "we're going to have a big card-party to-morrow afternoon. After giving us that warning he won't dream of suspecting that we aren't going to take it. I'm glad it's happened. Now we shall be as safe as houses. The beginning of the term mustn't be

neglected. It's the best time, because everybody has got plenty of cash. I've asked Williams and Wilmot from Skipper's house and we can have in Shepheard, if you like."

"But you've no right to bring in boys from other houses. You haven't been five years in the house yet."

"My good Pigeon, rights are made for slaves. You know I always do just what pleases me."

"Did you get any cards in the holidays, Coryton?" asked Gaverigan, helping himself to jam and Cornish cream.

"Rather! didn't we, Pigeon? By Jove! I wish we could get Vixie down one afternoon. She plays nap better than any of you. Stunning girl, isn't she, Pigeon?"

"Who is she?" inquired Gaverigan.

"A girl who was staying at Blarney. Miss Violet Tresillian, commonly called the Vixen. No end of a sport. Keen as mustard. Brave as a lioness."

“ ‘Innocent as a lord,’ to quote some poor devil who was accused of sheep-stealing the other day.”

“ Yes, just about. She promised to make Sir Edward bring her down for a cricket-match one day this term. I’ll get ‘em to come on a whole holiday and then we can all lunch together at the King’s Head. You must write and remind them, Pigeon.”

“ What, already? ”

“ Don’t be a fool, Pigeon. You know you’re just as devoted to her as the rest of us. As for Pim, he was ready to lick her boots.”

“ Surprising I didn’t get my remove this term,” growled Pimlico, to change the subject.

“ Much more surprising their making you a monitor, Coryton,” said Gaverigan. “ I never was more astonished than when Butler called you up to give you the key in speecher this morning.”

“ It’s only the natural reward of wisdom and piety, my dear chap,” he replied gaily.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCAPEGOAT.

Rien n'est bête de ce qui réussit, Papa.

—GUY DE MAUPASSANT, *Notre Coeur.*

THE first few weeks of the term passed off uneventfully. The card-party was a great success and was followed by several others without arousing the least suspicion. Tyrconnel got sent to extra-school for failure in his holiday-task. It was very hard lines, for he had known it perfectly, but Shepheard had spoken to him during the examination and the master in charge had torn up their papers as a punishment. Shepheard growled about

it for days, but the Pigeon took it more philosophically. Poor fellow, he was getting pretty well accustomed to hard lines by this time.

To crown his disappointment, the extra-school was fixed for the afternoon of the whole holiday, on which Sir Edward Tresillian and his niece were to visit Harrow. At first the Pigeon was for asking them to put off coming, but it seemed more than doubtful whether their engagements would permit another visit, so the Pigeon consoled himself with the prospect of seeing them in the morning and at luncheon.

The day dawned bright and clear, and the boys were in the highest spirits, as they dallied over their breakfast till long past ten. Pimlico was going to spend the morning at a wicket; Gaverigan had arranged to go down to 'Ducker,' for a bathe after the eleven o'clock 'bill';—Tyrconnel and Coryton hurried down to meet the 10.30 train by the Metropolitan Railway.

"Poor old Pigeon," said Coryton, as they ran down the hill, "having to go to 'extra' this fine day. Vixie will be disappointed, when she hears. Never mind, I'll wait outside for you afterwards, with a bag of buns, if you're a good boy, and you shall be taken down to Ducker straight away."

On their way down, they passed a number of people also on their way to the station, including several masters, who proposed to take advantage of the holiday for a run up to town.

"I only hope none of those beaks will take it into their heads to ask me if I had leave to come to the station," said Tyrconnel plaintively, as they entered the gravel-walk leading up to it. "'Twould be just my luck if they did. But they'd hardly be so mean just as they're going to enjoy themselves."

"Oh! you don't know the beasts. That's the very moment when they're often most vicious. I luckily thought of asking Weller last night, when

he was correcting my prose. I'd wait outside if I were you. It's no use running useless risks."

"No, here we are. The train's just coming in. They wouldn't have the cheek to stop me when I was with people."

The train steamed in and the boys were soon shaking hands with Sir Edward and Violet, who were accompanied by a tall lady and a stout military looking gentleman.

"How are you, boys?" exclaimed Sir Edward heartily. "Let me introduce you to my cousin, Lady Giddy. You know Colonel Lockhart already, I think. Shall we walk or drive up? What is your programme for us?"

"We must go up to eleven-bill first," replied Tyrconnel, "then we can order lunch and go and pretend to look at the cricket, if you like."

He had hardly done speaking when one of the masters, Mr. Brooks, an ill-favoured old clergyman with shabby clothes and round shoulders, came up

to him and said, "One moment, Mr. Tyrconnel, please; I want to speak to you."

"Poor Pigeon!" said Coryton regretfully, as he watched the incident, "he's the most unlucky beggar alive. Brooker has a special spite against him and would send him up as soon as look at him."

"Why, what's he done?" asked Sir Edward, in astonishment.

"The station's out of bounds and, if we're caught there without leave, there's no end of a fuss. I happened to get leave from Wellesley last night, so I'm all right. But the poor Pigeon will get dropped on."

"Surely it isn't such a dreadful crime to come and meet your friends at the station."

"One of the seven deadly sins, I assure you, Sir Edward. Well, Pigeon, what's the verdict?"

"Five hundred lines by lock-up to-morrow. And he wants to speak to you, old chap."

“ This is too bad ! ” exclaimed Sir Edward hotly. “ I’ll go and speak to the man myself. He was at Harrow with me and, if I take all the blame on myself, he may listen to reason. It’s a shame, pouncing on boys when they’re with ladies, in this way.”

The others made their way slowly up the hill, Tyrconnel and Violet leading the way.

“ You see what we have to put up with, Vixie,” said the former. “ It’s worse than Poland under the Russians.”

“ Very provoking,” said the girl, with a soft light in her eyes. “ I shall never forgive myself for being the innocent cause of it all, for I feel that you ran this risk solely on my account.”

“ Nonsense, Vixie, you know I would submit to any punishment for your sake.”

Violet Tresillian was a universal favourite and yet no one knew exactly why they liked her. She was one of those girls who really haven’t a feature,

if you try to dissect their appearance, but, taken as a whole, she was decidedly attractive and even pretty. Her face was round and smooth and child-like, her slightly upturned nose and mischievous eyes gave a suggestion of devilry and, when her cherry-red lips parted, as they constantly did in sunny smiles, they revealed a dazzling set of pearly teeth. Great waves of golden hair were hemmed in under a sailor-hat, trimmed with dark-blue ribbon, chosen out of compliment to Harrow. She wore a well-fitting tailor-made dress of thin blue cloth, which gave a hint of horsiness and served to show off her compact figure, which was already well developed, though she was now only just sixteen.

The great charm about her was the fresh, innocent way in which she said the most startling things imaginable. Everybody treated her as an utter child, but in reality she had a much longer head than anyone gave her credit for, and had already a scheme of life well thought out as well

as a reason for nearly everything she said or did. It was commonly supposed that her uncle would leave most of his money to her, but she felt by no means sure on the point, and was determined to secure the kind of husband she had in her mind as soon as possible. He was to be agreeable and ready to let her have her own way, that went without saying, but the chief requisites, to her mind, were money and ambition,—especially ambition.

She had thought of the Pigeon—whenever anyone thought of the Pigeon it was always to see what could be got out of him—but, though the Pigeon was a nice boy and had any amount of money, she was not sure about him on the question of ambition. Now Coryton had ambition; he did not tell everybody so, but she had ascertained the fact for herself; he was also a nice boy, and of course the only son of so successful a personage as Her Majesty's Judge-Advocate General would be well off.

But it was too soon to do more than lay the

foundations of a flirtation with either of them, she reflected, as she walked up the hill, making pretty speeches to Wilfrid Tyrconnel. Boys' characters were hopelessly unformed before five-and-twenty and even after, for the matter of that. A girl of sixteen knew infinitely more of the world than any of them. However, boys were always fun to play with.

Coryton was pointing out the various school-buildings to Lady Giddy, as boys seem to think visitors expect them to do. That pretentious erection of startling red brick and hideous design was the 'new schools,' chiefly given up to the futile study of natural science, known in schoolboy parlance as 'Stinks;' the little house over the way, from which proceeded hideous discords, was devoted to instruction in the 'sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music,' chiefly for the benefit of the school volunteers' band; the precipitous road between this and the new schools led to the ill-drained football-field, where, after the autumnal

rains, the athletes of compulsion wallowed almost up to their necks in foetid mud; beyond the 'footer-field' was the school bathing place, 'Ducker' (originally called 'Duck-puddle,' but the Harrow dialect gives the *er* termination to every possible word) and 'Ducker' was really the least unpleasant institution in the school; here was the school chapel, disagreeably modern for a school that prided itself on age, but it might not look bad in a hundred years or so; the building in the enclosure beyond it was the Vaughan Library, built in honour of the late head-master, for the benefit of the boys, but as a matter of fact almost exclusively used by the masters; the big house beyond it was the head-master's—the largest in the School, with accommodation for sixty boys; the head-master must make a prodigious income out of them all; here they must turn up a small flight of steps, past the French master's house, and join the stream of boys, all hurrying in the same direction.

By this time Sir Edward and Coryton had caught up the others, and they all went on towards the schoolyard, to witness the ceremony of 'bill.'

"Cross-grained chap, Brooks," said Sir Edward, "I had quite a hard job with him, though I laid it on very thick about the memory of old times, and all that. But I think I've got you off, Wilfrid, old man. He says he's bound to mention it to Wellesley, but that he won't be harder on you than he can help."

"That's awfully good of you, Sir Edward. I am only sorry you've had so much trouble on my account."

When they reached the iron gates of the school-yard, the boys parted company from their friends to take their places in the procession and answer their names. On the lowest step of the flight, leading up to the old schools, stood a master in cap and gown with the 'bill-book,' or roll-call, in his hand. Sir Edward led his party up a few

steps above him, where a few friends of other boys were already congregated.

Violet was struck by the freshness and pictur-esquefulness of the scene: the crowd of eager youngsters in their neat jackets and swallow-tail coats and their odd saucer-like straw hats with big brims; the Elizabethan building behind, reminiscent of generations of floggings; and the bird's-eye background with the smoke of London just imaginable on the horizon.

The boys were thickest at the western corner of the school house, beside the den of 'Custos,' commonly called Sam, dispenser of school paper and racquet balls, bulbous-nosed, traditional. The crowd condensed itself into a single file of boys, in the order of their forms, ever walking towards the master.

As each boy's name was read, he touched his hat, murmured "Here, Sir," and slouched off with his hands in his pockets. The file was like a

long wriggling snake, ever being decapitated and yet never growing shorter.

Usually the boys were only too glad to hurry off to their various avocations as soon as their names were called, but to-day the first hundred or so were seen to hang about the iron bars beside the entrance of the yard, waiting for some event to take place. At last it came to the turn of a broad-shouldered boy in flannels to answer his name.

Directly the name was called, the whole yardful of boys began to clap hands and the hero of the hour, first deliberately undoing the elastic at the back of his head and then removing his hat, ran the few yards which separated him from the crowd at the gates, where he was received with a chorus of congratulations and many slappings on the back. It was the usual ovation to a freshly-nominated member of the school cricket-eleven.

“That fellow,” observed Sir Edward, as he ex-

plained the custom to Lady Giddy, “is tasting the sweetness of triumph in a way that few men ever do. With these boys, cricket is a fetish and there is an idolatrous reverence shown to the members of the cricket eleven, which is certainly never shown by the House of Commons to the Cabinet, perhaps not even by the College of Cardinals to the Pope. This boy’s sole insignia are the right to wear white flannels instead of grey and blue, and a speckled straw hat instead of a white one, but in this microcosm he is as absolute as a Cæsar and as infallible as a Sovereign Pontiff in their larger spheres.”

“Pom-pom!” whispered Coryton in Violet’s ear, at the end of this tirade.

“It is a pretty scene,” she said, taking his elbow in her little hand affectionately. “Where are you taking me?” she added, as he led her up the school steps.

“Into the fourth-form room, to show you Byron’s

name. It is the only sight worth seeing here. After lunch I want you to send the others on to see the chapel and the Vaughan library and all the rest of it, while you come with me and pretend to watch cricket."

"That's all settled, is it, Poley?" she asked mischievously.

"Yes, Vixie."

They entered the old schoolroom, with its battered oak panels, and peered about among the historic carvings. They were both of the age which makes for Byron-worship and they peered with the respect of pilgrims at the rough marks of the poet's jack-knife.

"How disgustingly modern!" she exclaimed presently pointing to the top panels all round the room, where serried rows of names had been precisely carved, one underneath the other, by the village carpenter at half-a-crown a name. "I hope you won't have yours put up in that way. What possible interest can those have to anyone

on earth, except perhaps the man paid for measuring them out. Fancy the generation after next coming here to look for Walpole Coryton's name and finding it lost in that mechanical array."

"I promise you it shan't," he laughed, as they went out.

Tyrconnel greeted them enthusiastically outside. "Now, Vixie," he exclaimed, "you are mine from now until the clock strikes half-past two. I am like a poor ghost, who is only allowed to walk about for a certain period of time. When the fatal hour tolls, I shall be mewed up in yon prison house and Coryton will resume his sway."

"That's alarming," she laughed, starting full pelt down the hill towards the cricket ground.

Coryton and Tyrconnel made off in hot pursuit, while Pimlico and Gaverigan piloted the rest of the party to the King's Head to order lunch.

That meal proved a great success, everybody having a regular schoolboy appetite and being in

the best of humours. Violet sat between her two 'best boys,' as she called Coryton and Tyrconnel, and carried on a desperate flirtation with Pimlico across the table; Sir Edward and Colonel Lockhart grew reminiscent of their Harrow school days, while Lady Giddy discussed French novels confidentially with Gaverigan.

When it was time for Tyrconnel to go through his penance of spending two hours and a half in a stuffy school room copying out the Latin Grammar, Violet showed herself unusually sympathetic, walking part of the way with him and talking eagerly of future meetings. She would try to persuade her uncle to come down again for another cricket match, but at any rate they would meet at Lord's for the Eton and Harrow, and Lord Balinglass had asked her to Blarney later on.

"You won't forget me, Wilfrid?" she said, with a very plausible affectation of tearfulness, as they parted outside Wilbee's bookshop.

“The stars may fall and the angels be weeping—” he began, but she knew the quotation and was running off with a friendly wave of her parasol.

“Now for the other little fish,” she laughed to herself, as she espied Coryton standing moodily outside the little circle of her friends near Mr. Wellesley’s house. Sir Edward was proposing the usual round of sight-seeing, beginning with the Vaughan library and ending with the reputed scene of Byron’s meditations in the churchyard on the hill top.

“I am much too tired for all that in this hot weather,” Violet exclaimed as she came up. “You can all go and trot yourselves off your legs if you like. Poley and I are going down to watch cricket and eat cherries in the shade. I suppose we’ll meet you at four-bill.”

“What’s that?” asked Lady Giddy.

“The roll-call,” explained Sir Edward. “These poor boys have to go through that ceremony five

times on a whole holiday. It doesn't give them much time to get into mischief, does it? Vi is getting to talk the language of the country quite nicely, isn't she?"

"Poley is such a capital teacher," she murmured, looking the boy full in the eyes.

"Where are you taking me to?" she asked him presently, as her programme was being carried out and the others had started off for the library.

"I want you to come and see my room, will you?" he said, leading the way into Mr. Wellesley's house as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"Well, you *are* a cheeky boy?" she exclaimed with a slight flush and dancing eyes, following him all the same.

"You have had your name cut by the village carpenter after all," she remarked, pausing before one of the boards covered with rows of names that lined the staircase-wall; "I thought you disapproved of the practice this morning?"

“That was in order to have the pleasure of agreeing with you,” he replied; “besides I had no choice, every new boy finds that the house does it at his expense, the half-crown being deducted from his allowance.”

“You are a cool boy, you know,” she said, as they entered his room. “I think that’s one of the reasons why I like you so much, Poley. I have a fellow-feeling for you, because I am accustomed to do pretty impudent things myself sometimes. The way you took it for granted that I would come up here was simply magnificent. I don’t think I’d have come if you’d asked me any other way and I certainly should not have come for anybody else.”

“It is sweet of you to say that. I didn’t at all take it for granted, though. I thought that was the best chance of getting you, and I am awfully glad it has succeeded.”

“Well, I’m glad too. What a pretty room you’ve

got!" she went on, walking round and peering at everything, talking down books, examining the marks of china and smiling at the extravagance of an Impressionist caricature of art. "I had no idea boys were so comfortable."

"They aren't," he replied. "I'll show you some other rooms presently more like bear-gardens than human habitations."

She sat on the window-seat, surveying the room critically. "It is very well arranged," she commented. "You have too many things in it, for the size, but one would scarcely notice it. That is the highest possible tribute to your taste. One should aim at getting the whole of Wardour-Street into a garret and yet making it look as bare as a billiard-table. Even shabbiness is preferable to over-crowding. After all, I think it is more like a boudoir than a study. All those flowers suggest effeminacy. I have never quite made up my mind whether you are effeminate, or only lazy."

“Oh, effeminate, by all means, I have a theory that, to be really charming, no man can be too effeminate and no woman too masculine.”

“I’m not masculine, please remember.”

“I wondered whether you’d say that. You have a masculine mind, certainly. You are naturally rash, but you are the sort of person who doesn’t make mistakes. You are at the same time utterly unscrupulous. Now, if I know anything of life—”

“Which you don’t.”

“If I know anything of life, that is a very powerful combination. Calculated recklessness is the philosopher’s stone in the nineteenth century.”

“You are very young to be such a philosopher,” she said, smiling.

“*Si jeune et déjà fils de ministre!*” he quoted.

She watched him curiously for nearly a minute.

“Do you know, I think our characters are very much alike?” she said at length. . . . “I see the others down there,” she added presently; “after

you have given me a glass of that cherry-brandy, you can go and fetch them up. It might seem odd, if we were seen coming out of the house alone together."

"In that oddness lies our safety," he replied, holding the door open for her.

Meanwhile the hours had been going very slowly to Tyrconnel over his unproductive labours in the hot, sulky school-room. His face lit up with pleasure when at last the two and a half hours were over and he found Coryton playing at yard-cricket while waiting for him.

It is a capital game for spare moments and merits mention as a Harrow institution. The batsman is solely occupied in defending his wicket and has no time to think of making runs. The bowlers are legion: anybody who happens to be about takes his turn; as soon as one ball has been parried another follows, and then another in breathless succession. Whoever bowls the batsman out

is privileged to take his place. The beauty of the game is the quickness with which it goes along. In rapidity and variety of emotion it bears the same relation to real cricket that roulette or baccarat do to whist or betting on the tape.

When Tyrconnel came out, the yard was very full and, seeing that Coryton was batting, he stood for some moments admiring the skill and alertness with which he defended his wicket, never trying to hit far, but never allowing any ball to take him unawares.

When Coryton saw Tyrconnel, he threw down his bat and cried out to a friend, "there you are, Williams, you can have my innings. Pigeon, I'm your man. Poor old fellow!" he went on as he caught him up, "you do look pulled down after this inhuman torture. I couldn't neglect you for another instant. Let's start at once for Ducker. A bathe will do you all the good in the world."

The boys set off down the steep path to the

football field. Tyrconnel wanted to hear everything that Violet had said and done, but Coryton preferred to talk about the Derby.

“I’m not quite satisfied about my book,” he said, in answer to a tirade about Violet’s laugh, “if *Gone-away* wins I shall lose a pot. Of course it’s got no chance on the *Two Thousand* running, but horses are almost as ticklish as young ladies, though in a different sense. However, I feel more cocksure every day about *Jumping Cat*. I’ve a great mind to give the Basket-man a fiver to put on. It’s a nuisance there not being any book-maker here one can trust, and if I sent to one of the Boulogne men, the answer might get intercepted.”

“The Basket-man welshed Williams and Wilmot over the *Cesarewitch*,” replied Tyrconnel, as they crossed the stile into the football field.

It was looking its best, with the sun lighting up the haycocks, and along the broad path in the centre were endless boys, generally in twos and

threes, going to and from the bathing-place, some with towels and others with bags of buns for consumption after the bath.

Coryton mentally compared them to ants. Tyrconnel thought of Jacob's ladder.

"How do you stand on the race?" the former asked presently, as they sauntered on, drawing deep breaths of the hay-scented air.

"I've put my shirt on Sir Galahad. I'll back him against Jumping Cat, even money, if you like."

"All right, even tenner, one to win."

Tyrconnel took out a neat small morocco pocket-book and was proceeding to enter the bet in pencil, when a cheery voice sounded in his ear.

"Well, Tyrconnel, what have you got there?" and Mr. Wellesley, who was hurrying down to the bathing-place to preside at a swimming-pass, snatched the pocket-book playfully out of his hand.

"Please give me that back, sir," the boy pleaded, "there are private matters in it."

Mr. Wellesley was about to do so, when an entry caught his eye: 'Derby, G. £2 to £10 Gladiator.' His face suddenly grew grave. "Here is your book, Mr. Tyrconnel, I have seen quite enough."

He was about to stride on, when a thought struck him.

"Were you betting with him then, Coryton?" he asked.

"No, sir, certainly not. I was giving Tyrconnel the address of a racket-shop he asked me for."

The statement was made so simply and straightforwardly that it was impossible to doubt it.

"Very well," the master assented, passing on; "Mr. Tyrconnel, I will see you in my study after lock-up."

"You are an unlucky beggar," Coryton began.

"You are an astounding liar," Tyrconnel replied, rather testily. "I can't stand untruthfulness. I don't know how it is I have liked you so much."

“Pshaw, when a man asks you indiscreet questions, you have a perfect right to lie. It is an acknowledged principle of ethics. Walter Scott denied the authorship of the *Waverley* novels point blank, when the Wellesley of his day had the impudence to ask. And Walter Scott was an honourable man.”

They entered the bathing-place, Tyrconnel a little disturbed by the incident, Coryton utterly unmoved.

‘Ducker’ was pretty full. Mr. Wellesley was marshalling his swimmers for the pass and a big boy had just entered the water with a sounding splash; but on the whole it was an atmosphere of laziness, most of the boys seemed to be lying about on the seats, on the pavement even, wrapped up in great rough bath-sheets, munching buns and basking in the sun. Even the boys in the water seemed very drowsy in their movements, for it was an exceedingly hot day.

After the bath our two friends got separated, Coryton walking up with Williams and Wilmot,

two boys in another house, from whom he wanted the odds against Jumping Cat for the Derby and a promise to join a card-party in Tyrconnel's room on the day of the race.

In the evening Tyrconnel had an unpleasant interview with Mr. Wellesley, who was at first inclined to send him up to the head-master on the charge of betting, but at length consented, in view of the way in which he had made the discovery, to commute the punishment to 500 Latin lines.

He had also to communicate the fact that Mr. Brooks had informed him of Tyrconnel's presence at the station and that he declined to reduce the penalty he had imposed by a single line.

“I cannot say I am sorry for you, Mr. Tyrconnel,” he said in severe tones, as he dismissed him, “you know you only had to ask my leave and I would have allowed you to meet Sir Edward at the station with pleasure.”

“It's very hard lines, sir.”

"Yes, yes, I daresay, but you must learn that you cannot break rules with impunity."

The next few days were days of toil for the unfortunate boy, for he was very anxious to get his lines done by Wednesday, when an extra-special card-party had been convened to his room in honour of Derby day.

The proverb about more haste and worse speed was exemplified in his case by the further calamity of a surprise visit from Mr. Wellesley while he was engaged in the process known as 'tollying-up', or working by candle-light after the legal hours. Mr. Wellesley had seen the light in his room from the road when returning from a master's meeting, and punished him by tearing up his whole evening's work.

A light had also been burning in Coryton's room, but when Mr. Wellesley arrived he was already in bed, with his exercise for next morning carefully stowed away in his hat.

“ You had a candle, Coryton,” said Mr. Wellesley abruptly, as he entered.

“ Yes, sir,” replied Coryton simply, knowing instinctively that denial was useless.

“ Well, it will not help you much, for I shall tear up the work you have been doing.”

He went up to the table and destroyed several sheets of exercise paper which he found there, covered with Coryton’s handwriting.

“ You will have to get up early to-morrow morning and do it all over again,” he added maliciously as he left the room.

Coryton waited until Mr. Wellesley’s step was heard far down the creaking stair. Then he burst into a peal of hearty laughter, which lasted so long that Shepheard presently came in from next door to see what was the matter.

“ He has torn up my rough copy,” said Coryton with another wild burst of merriment.

When Derby day came, Tyrconnel had finished

his punishment and was in excellent spirits again, as he welcomed his friends after fourth school. Cards and drinks were produced and the poker, as usual, was placed in the door.

"Nobody's heard the result yet, of course?" said Coryton interrogatively, as they all sat down. "Grey is to have a telegram and will hang about with it outside the house as soon as it comes."

The game went on for some time with varying fortunes. Williams and Wilmot were evidently nervous about the result of the race and played badly. Coryton, as usual, was utterly unpreoccupied and laughed gaily all the while, though his interest in the race was considerably larger than theirs.

After about an hour's play, Wilmot, who had been looking furtively out of the windows between each deal, suddenly exclaimed, "Isn't that Weller's coachman down there by the railings? Run and see what it is, Coryton, there's a good fellow."

Coryton needed no second bidding.

"That's Grey right enough," he said, after a glance out of the window. "I'll be back in two jiffs."

He had scarcely been absent longer than is implied by half that mysterious measure of time, when an authoritative knock came at the door. Williams and Wilmot had wished to wait for Coryton's return, but Pimlico, who was losing, would not hear of it, so the poker had been replaced in the door.

"How quick he's been," growled Pimlico, who had only one bet on the race and disliked being disturbed.

Gaverigan, who was nearest the door, pulled out the poker and a chorus of eager voices exclaimed, "Well, what's won?"

Then there was a moment of silence that could be felt, the sort of silence which immediately precedes the crash in some great cataclysm.

Mr. Wellesley stood before them, his upper lip trembling with anger and excitement.

“Williams and Wilmot,” he cried in a choking voice, “what are you doing here? Leave the house instantly.”

The boys obeyed sheepishly, looking very much ashamed of themselves. Mr. Wellesley watched them sternly, with his arm outstretched and pointing to the door.

When they were gone, he took up the cards two or three at a time, gravely tearing them in two and flinging them into the grate as he did so.

The boys had risen and stood about the room in uncomfortable attitudes. Tyrconnel looked annoyed but not frightened; Pimlico’s face was inscrutable and, but for occasional sniffs through the nose, showed no signs of emotion; Gaverigan was whistling under his breath to conceal his feelings; Shepheard was red in the face and inclined to be tearful.

After destroying the cards, Mr. Wellesley espied

a bottle of claret and a bottle of cherry-brandy on a side-table.

An ominous silence reigned. Mr. Wellesley was too much agitated to speak.

He took the bottles and poured out their contents into a foot-bath, his hand shaking nervously all the while.

When he had done, he said in a low voice, " You will all be sent up to the head-master," and left the room hastily, shutting the door after him.

The boys remained silent for some time, sitting looking at each other.

" What extraordinary luck that fellow Coryton has," said Tyrconnel at last. " What a nose to choose that very moment to go down and talk to Grey."

The others laughed nervously.

There was a cheery knock at the door and that envied mortal burst in, with a grim smile on his usually unmoved face.

“Jumping Cat, Garibaldi, The Butcher,” he cried gleefully, before he had time to realize the situation.

“Why, what’s up?” he added after a short, surprised pause.

“We are betrayed,” replied Gaverigan, in tragical tones.

“Who’s been drinking all my cherry-brandy?” pursued Coryton, pointing to the empty bottle; “won’t anybody tell me what has happened? Have you been raided by the police, or what?”

It was a long time before he would quite believe in what had taken place. When he did take it in, his first impulse was to raise a Te Deum to his lucky star.

“It is better to be born lucky than rich or wise or good, my Pigeon,” he remarked sententiously after it had all been described to him at least a dozen times.

Then came a feeling of annoyance that there could be no more cards that term, but the joy over his

miraculous escape kept predominant and, when he thought it over afterwards, he really felt more glad than sorry that the discovery had taken place. The victory of Jumping Cat in the Derby had put his finances more than straight and his absence from the fatal game would remove from the mind of Mr. Wellesley the germs of suspicion about him, which he knew existed there to some extent. Indeed, the more he thought of it all, the more he liked it. Never for an instant did any feeling of sympathy for the sufferers cross his mind. He chaffed them about their probable fate until they got as nearly angry with him as anybody ever could.

“ You’ll get it hottest of all, Pigeon,” he was saying when the lock-up bell rang. “ I really never heard of such a scapegrace in my life as you are turning out. Extra-schools, betting-books, out of bounds, tolying-up, and now this disgraceful orgy, this attempt to turn a respectable master’s house into a low drinking saloon and dicing-den.”

Coryton's jesting prognostication came true. Tyrconnel was subjected to long and anxious interrogation by his housemaster and the headmaster, and a public expulsion was seriously discussed. In the end milder counsels prevailed and he was 'requested to leave', that is to say, sent away without the publicity and disgrace of a regular expulsion.

The other boys were degraded from their forms. The ceremony took place publicly at 'bill'. As it came to the turn of one of them to answer his name, the master motioned him to come up and stand on the school steps and wait until his form had passed. Then the boy took his place again at the head of the next form, answered his name, touched his hat and walked away. The ordeal would have been far more severe if the sufferers had not known that they possessed the entire sympathy of their audience, who viewed the proceedings with chill silence.

Coryton perhaps alone looked on with satisfaction, and many were the congratulations he

received from those who had heard the story.

"I really think I must furbish up a votive offering for the altar of Saint Blaise, or whoever it is that patronizes poor gamblers," he said at last.

The term passed on uneventfully after the catastrophe. Coryton had an opportunity of renewing his flirtation with Violet at the Eton and Harrow match and, as no one else of his set had been allowed an *exit*, he had all the running to himself.

The term came quickly enough to an end and, as he sat in the train leaving Harrow for the last time, he could not help marvelling at the singular good luck that had attended every incident of his life.

Even during the next fifteen months at Heidelberg it did not seem to fail him. It failed him perhaps for a moment at the time of his father's death, but that, he told himself a little later, was really a lucky stroke after all, for it left him his own master, free to put to the proof the paternal advice that his best friend was himself.

CHAPTER IV.

CAMBRIDGE.

The best of all ways
To lengthen our days
Is to steal a few hours from the night, my dear.

—OLD SONG.

WALPOLE CORYTON had quite settled down at Cambridge. The bitter memories of the weeks which followed his father's death, were safely locked in his breast, stowed away like skeletons in a cupboard. If ever he allowed himself to have a peep at them, it was only as a reminder of what was and might be, and to impress upon himself the necessity of keeping guard. Not that he needed such a re-

minder. He had laid his plans carefully, and they were developing themselves in a manner which came up to his most sanguine expectations.

His first year at Cambridge passed uneventfully enough. It is with most freshmen a period of transition—the half-way house between babyhood and B.A.hood—but with Walpole Coryton it had been rather a period of taking stock and settling down.

As he had calculated, when he enrolled his name upon the ‘ancient, royal, and religious foundation’ of Trinity, his old Harrow friends quickly rallied around him. He was elected as a matter of course to all the best clubs, and became part and parcel of the gilded youth of the University, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh.

One of the ‘new humourists’,—whose newness, say some, is more evident than their humour,—has divided undergraduate Cambridge into ‘bloods’ and ‘smugs,’ much as someone else once divided mankind into apes and angels. Lord Beaconsfield on a memor-

able occasion wisely expressed himself 'on the side of the angels'. Coryton, wiser still, determined to make the best of both.

Roughly speaking, there are not two but three great classes, the aristocracy, the plutocracy, (if indeed there be still any distinction between the two) and the democracy. The first gives *cachet*, the second means cash, the third is *crachat*, and all these three—at least so Walpole Coryton argued—are necessary to a perfect life.

With the first two of them, he was already in touch; the problem was how to make use of the third. He solved it in this way. There is in Cambridge an institution known as the Union Society. Its influence in the University is altogether overrated by those outside. But to a man who aspires to political life, the training which it affords is invaluable. Coryton did aspire to political life and he was shrewd enough to see that the Union might be utilized by him as a sort of field, in which to

take a preliminary canter before settling down to the serious business of the race for name and fame.

He conceived the idea of becoming President of the Union—and having conceived it, he proceeded to carry it into effect. He became a frequent speaker at its debates. He united with a fluent and lucid delivery an engaging manner and a seriousness which he did not feel. He had the knack of appearing in earnest over everything. He was a Tory of course, as befitted the son of the late Judge-Advocate General, but his Toryism was of a very elastic and progressive type, and he was a devout worshipper at the shrine of the Jumping Cat—that patron saint of latter-day politicians.

As a political speaker, he was very successful; he cultivated an extra-parliamentary manner, and affected an intimate acquaintance with the Tory Leaders. His Church speeches were excellent, and he was careful always to avoid wounding the Non-conformist conscience, as represented by the 'pi'

men from the Colleges over the border. They all had votes!

Coryton 'kept' in large rooms on the King's-parade, the windows of which overlooked Henry VI.'s 'hoary regal fane' and gave exquisite glimpses of the blossoming college gardens and leafy backs. He had brought his Lares and Penates from Harrow with him to Cambridge and added to them. His shelves had been enriched, if not adorned, by the addition of several bluebooks. On his walls were sundry flaring daubs by French Impressionist painters, which certainly had the merit of eccentricity: a crucifixion by Besnard, depicted on the Hill of Montmartre, with a Magdalene in *café chantant* costume; a Cochin China landscape by Louis Dumoulin with Cochin China hens in the foreground; and, for British art, a portrait of the late Judge-Advocate General in Whistler-and-treacle style, by Mr. Walter Slick. There was also a group of the Government, of which his father had been a minor member.

Over the fire-place, by way of displaying hero-worship, were prints of Napoleon, Disraeli, Marlborough, and Ignatius Loyola; a bust in bronze of Zumalacarregui and one in marble of Lord Byron; a large engraving from a picture of Charles II; and a row of medallions of the Cæsars. All were in fairly close communion with the owner's character, in which the frank cynicism of the witty king, the self-conceit of the poet, the dash of the guerilla-leader and the simple subtlety of the first Jesuit all found their part. It was not merely worship at the shrine of success; it was also a confession of faith in calculated foolhardiness, sincere insincerity, and the vices as a means to an end.

If the elder Coryton—from his place above or below—could by some occult vision, have peered into his son's room; he would doubtless have been much touched by the post-mortem filial devotion evidenced by the prominence of his portrait. But then, as Walpole said to himself, “He never was

of any use to me when he was alive, he may as well be of some little use to me now that he is dead," and all these bluebooks and ministerial groups helped to impress his supporters at the Union.

He would ask some of them to breakfast now and then--very early breakfasts, so as to get them out of the way before Pimlico or Tyrconnel or any other of that ilk dropped in—and they would settle the affairs of the nation to their own satisfaction, the host doing most of the listening. And they always went away impressed with the fact that Coryton of Trinity was really a very clever fellow, though of course not quite so clever as themselves.

"Whatever makes you keep on the K.P., Coryton?" indolently asked Sir Lauder Forbes, an impecunious young Scottish baronet, whose almost girlish beauty had earned for him at Eton the pet name of 'Dolly', "Why don't you come to Jesus Lane? Everywhere else is so far off."

Coryton laughed and parried the question.

“ Oh! I didn’t know, you see. When I came up, Joey Prior had taken the rooms for me and it’s too much trouble to move. Next term I shall be in college.”

Truth to tell he was rather glad to be a little ‘far off’; it gave him more time to himself and a freer hand. The things which were to Forbes and his set the *summum bonum* of Cambridge life—Athenæum Teas, ‘True Blue’ functions, Cottenham meetings and so forth—were to Coryton only phases, to be utilized as means to the end he had in view—the advancement of himself.

The consciousness of this never left him, it regulated even the trifling incidents of his life—for he knew the value of trifles, and despised not the day of small things.

It was with him this evening while he dressed himself leisurely and sallied forth to join the ‘Yellow-hammers’.

The Yellowhammers was a dining club at Magdalene, one of the many dining clubs of the little college down by the riverside, whose tutelary deities are Bacchus and Diana. But the Yellowhammers was the most select of all the Magdalene Clubs, so select in fact that its numbers were once reduced to two and never exceeded six.

It mustered about that number now, but there were guests beside, who brought the total number on this particular evening up to twelve. Although admission was so difficult, the rules were very simple and were summed up in the obligation of each member to give a dinner during term. These functions were attended by all the other Yellowhammers, who solemnly arrayed themselves for the occasion in velvet coats with yellow satin facings and wore the club sash, garterwise, across their dress shirts.

The dinner to-night was held in Lord Pimlico's rooms on the left hand side of the Court. They

were large, handsome rooms, probably two sets knocked into one—for there is plenty of space in Magdalene—furnished absolutely without taste, but with a large amount of comfort.

The walls were tapestried with some dull red cloth and adorned with a few sporting pictures, Hogarth's "Rake's Progress" in quaint black and gold frames, a somewhat indecent old print of Venus and Adonis (Shakespeare's rendering), a fox's mask or two, and divers bloodthirsty-looking weapons, presumably imported from the South-sea Islands. There were portières over all the doors, Smyrna carpets on the floor, and a number of very comfortable chairs.

Pimlico received his guests with boisterous hilarity, looking much the same as when we last saw him at Harrow, only he had broadened somewhat, his jowl was a little heavier, and his pimples had disappeared. He was an important personage at Cambridge, Master of the Drag Hunt, President of the 'True Blues' and many other things beside.

The dinner was admirably cooked and admirably served. It would have passed muster at the Amphitryon. We mention this in passing, as certain lady novelists and others, with the assurance born of ignorance, have given to the world what they conceive to be orthodox pictures of undergraduate festivities—‘cold suppers and cider cup’, and heavy breakfasts, where the heroes of Ouida’s ‘flashing oar’, for instance, devour huge masses of semi-raw beef-steak.

There was nothing of this barbarism visible to-night. The wines and dishes alike were excellent. The table was graced with some fine old College silver and elaborately decorated with flowers—chrysanthemums, gold and brown, fringed with dark leaves and sprays of maidenhair fern, a blending of the club colours which had taxed the resources of that fair florist Clara Wren, who had come round from Rose-crescent to arrange them. The name-cards and *menus* from Redin’s were quite

works of art in their way, with the device of the club in gold relief, the whole being daintily tied together with a knot of brown and gold ribbon. The light of the wax candles was tempered by pale yellow shades.

The guests, like the wines, were of the choicest brand. They were all undergraduates—with the exception of a genial little sporting doctor well known in Cambridge and the County as secretary of the Hunt, and a young Squire, named Spofforth, who had gone down a year or two before, and who had driven in from Fulbourn for the occasion.

The dinner opened merrily and, as the wine went round, the tongues wagged faster.

“What are you doing on Tuesday, Coryton?” asked ‘Dolly’ Forbes. “Come and have a little dinner with me—some other fellows are coming, and then we’ll go and see Sally Popkins in *Frivolity*. I have taken a row of stalls. She can’t sing a bit of course, but she’s got a rippin’ figure.”

“Can’t, old chap, I’m very sorry. I have to oppose a resolution at the Union.”

“The Union! what is that? Are you on the Board of Guardians?” broke in Pimlico.

“It is a brick building somewhere between here and Sidney,” explained Forbes, with an elaborate affectation of ignorance, “isn’t it, Coryton?”

“Yes,” he said impassively, “it is. I suppose you go to Sidney for your dinners, Pim, like everyone else; these are capital quail,” he went on, helping himself as he spoke—“it is only Barber who knows how to do *cailles bardées* to a turn.”

“But about this Union, Corry?” persisted Forbes. “Surely you can chuck it for once? It’s Sally’s last night, you know.”

“Can’t, old chap, awfully sorry—they’d never forgive me, and I’m putting up for the Committee next term. By the way, Pim, I shall have to instruct you where the Union is—you’re a member, you know.”

“Am I? Oh! yes, I believe I am. My guv’nor made me pay seven guineas to the place when I first came up, so that I might learn to speak there. ‘Excellent practice for a public man,’ he said. But what the devil do you want me to go there for?”

“To put me up for the Committee;—you needn’t look so blank—it’s only to write my name in a book. I’ll show you what to do.”

“But, my dear fellow, I never go there—won’t Tyrconnel do as well?”

“No, no,” laughed Coryton, “not nearly as well. He is not the son of the Marquis of Southwark, you know. You see I know my constituents. They are very democratic but they ‘love a lord’. You remember that little German Baron—half English—who keeps on Gaverigan’s staircase in the New Court.”

“Von Raggedbach do you mean?”

“Yes, von Raggedbach. He will be president next term—at least he is going to put up for

it. For ages he was proposed for Committee as Franz von Raggedbach and he never got in; then someone remembered, and wrote down his trumpery title, and he headed the poll."

"What a lot of snobs!" exclaimed Forbes, with indolent disgust. "I wonder you trouble about them."

"We're all snobs, more or less," replied Coryton blandly, "it is only a question of degree. That is why all the bounders in Cambridge wear the terra-cotta ties and cloth caps you started last term, Dolly,—it is only another variety of the same snobbery—and why Loucher swaggers about in riding-breeches at ten o'clock in the morning, though he rides like a tailor—one would think he slept in them. But tell me, is it true that you are going to play Prince Hal at the A. D. C.?"

"I am not sure, I believe so." (It was a peculiarity of this youth that he was never sure of anything.)

"Hullo, Pigeon," he went on, turning to Tyrconnel,

who sat the other side of him, "what are you and the doctor looking so glum about?"

"The doctor's just been telling me about that chap who was thrown out hunting the other day —came a cropper at that ugly bullfinch, you remember—he's killed."

"Kicked, has he? Why, he didn't seem to be much the worse for his spill at the time. Did you attend him, doctor?"

"I did."

"Oh! then, that accounts for it."

There was a general laugh, in which the doctor joined.

"Doctor, you really ought to become a polygamist instead of remaining a gay bachelor."

"Why?" asked the man of few words, with a twinkle in his eye.

"You have helped so many people out of the world, it would only be fair that you should be made to repopulate it a little."

"My good fellow," he said, in a voice of mock indignation, "you would put a premium on vice."

"Vice—what is that?"

The doctor held his glass critically up to the light before replying.

"Oh—er—the opposite of virtue, I presume."

"And virtue?"

"Virtue," put in Coryton, looking down at his button-hole, a yellow carnation and a copper beech leaf—"virtue is a struggle against the promptings of nature—vice therefore, I take it, means simply that one yields to them."

"I know a much better definition of vice than that," cried Pimlico, who was now slightly 'on', but he was shouted down and his ribaldry became the signal for a general scrimmage. The doctor hurled the inside of a roll from the other end of the table and caught Pimlico full in the open mouth, just as he was leaning back, pealing with laughter.

“ You’re getting much too smart, Pigeon ! ” said a little, round, dark man, named Mauresk, mischievously, as Pimlico looked round for his assailant.

“ Oh ! it was you, was it ? ” Pimlico exclaimed, pelting Tyrconnel first with the flowers and then with over-ripe pears.

A wild tussle was meanwhile in progress between Spofforth and the doctor, who had caught him drinking up his wine whenever his back was turned. Williams and Wilmot were holding Forbes down on a couch and powdering his head with sifted sugar.

Coryton, who didn’t care for scrimmages, presently suggested roulette, but Gaverigan protested that the toast-list must come first.

“ The toast-list to-night is rather an original idea of my own,” he said demurely, during a pause in the hubbub.

“ Oh ! yes, let’s have the toasts,” exclaimed everyone, “ and then we’ll wind up with a gamble.”

Pimlico had intended to have the ordinary stereotyped toast-list,—‘The Queen’, ‘The Guests’, ‘The corps-de-ballet’, and all the rest of it, but Gaverigan, whom he had called in to supervise the spelling, had suggested that everyone should propose a toast ‘out of his head’, and so everybody had come brimful with ‘prepared impromptus’.

“Gaverigan, as you’re the originator of this notion, you’d best lead off,” said Pimlico, arranging himself once more in his seat at the top of the table, and planting his puffy hands on the arms of his chair.

“Well, gentlemen,” said Gaverigan, rising indolently, “my toast is ‘Change’,—there’s nothing so jolly as change.”

“I prefer fivers myself,” whispered Williams to Wilmot, but everybody cheered and emptied his glass, while Pimlico, who thought he had now discovered his former assailant, rained sponge-cakes in quick succession across the table at the doctor.

When Coryton got up, there was a lull in the battle.

“ Gentlemen,” he said, “ I have to propose to you a toast, which I am sure you will all of you be delighted to honour. It is that of the very best friends we have, our only sympathizers in adversity, our safest advisers in perplexity, our surest pilots to success, our kindest masters and most faithful slaves, the only true gods:—Our Jolly Good Selves!”

“ Bumpers then!” cried Spofforth and Pimlico in a breath.

“ No heel-taps, Pigeon!”

“ Good old Corry!”

“ Long live the future Vice-President of the Union!”

Rarely had such enthusiasm reigned, even at a dinner of the Yellowhammers.

When Gaverigan finished drinking, he crashed his glass upon the floor, exclaiming, “ After such a toast, this glass must never be put to vulgar

use again." Everybody followed suit and Pimlico gave a drunken variation of the view-halloo.

"Now then, a political toast," exclaimed Forbes as Mauresk rose to take his turn.

"Very well, gentlemen, I give you the toast of 'The Unemployed'."

A murmur went round the room.

"None of your d—d Radicalism here," growled Pimlico, who had now reached the aggressive stage.

"The Unemployed," Mauresk resumed impassively, "and long may they remain so!"

There was a roar of delight.

"And I beg to couple the doctor's name with that toast," added Spofforth slyly.

"Your turn, Pigeon, and be sharp about it."

"Gentlemen," said Pigeon impressively, "my toast is that of 'The British Conshtitoosh'n'."

"Good old Conshtitoosh'n! Hi-tiddly-hi-ti-hi! Hark For'ard, Pigeon!" yelled the interrupters.
"Whoo-oo-oop!"

“ The Brit’sh Consht’toosh’n, genelum,” he went on impassively, “ is like a bird—”, but he was not allowed to go on further, and had to fight for his life with Forbes, to escape being hustled ignominiously under the table.

“ That never struck me before,” said Coryton to Mauresk. “ The British Constitution is very like Pigeon. It means well, but only succeeds in making itself vastly ridiculous.”

“ You do it,” Williams murmured to Wilmot, as the battle of flowers was languishing for lack of chrysanthemums.

“ No, you do it,” said Wilmot to Williams.

“ All right,” said the latter. “ Gentlemen, I give you an old toast over again. I give you the toast of ‘Change’—a jolly quick change into the next room for roulette. It’s past eleven and we can’t stay here much after twelve, after all these rows we’ve been let in for lately.”

When either Williams or Wilmot said ‘we’,

they always meant themselves and no one else.

“Rot!” interjected Pimlico, who was in his own college and had no rules about gates to fear.

“We’ll make a night of it. Come along. Who’s going to take the bank?”

And he led the way into the next room, where a full-size roulette-board was waiting invitingly upon a long table of green cloth.

Coryton arranged that he and Pimlico should go shares in the bank, Pimlico spinning and himself doing the paying out and raking in. With the rules in vogue at Cambridge, to be banker was usually a profitable matter, for the maximum was not made sufficiently larger than the minimum to admit of doubling up or any sort of systematic play. Moreover Pimlico’s roulette was of the old Homberg pattern with two zeros, and he had made a rule that, whenever zero came, the banker cleared the board, instead of only taking half as at Monte Carlo.

Liqueurs were handed round and the game was soon soberly in progress. Pimlico, with a big cigar between his teeth, whirled the ball with a dignity begotten of many drinks; Tyrconnel scattered coins all over the numbers with a recklessness unusual even for him; Williams and Wilmot were trying a little system of their joint invention upon the dozens and columns; Mauresk stood about, smoking interminable cigarettes and staking half-sovereigns *à cheval* on the two zeros every time; Gaverigan was winning steadily over a long intermission on *Passe* and *Manque* and grumbling loudly that the lowness of the maximum interfered with his operations.

“All right, we’ll make it a tenner limit, eh? Coryton.”

“If we do, we must raise the minimum to ten bob,” returned that astute youth.

Williams and Wilmot raised a shrill protest, but the rest were inclined to acquiesce. Coryton,

however, cut the discussion short by looking at his watch and announcing laconically, "Half-past twelve! I'm off."

This aroused Pimlico's indignation and he began singing, "We won't go home till morning," in an aggressive tone. But Coryton lost no time in dividing the proceeds of the bank (£35 15 0 clear profit for each) and Forbes and Mauresk gathered up their caps and gowns to join him in his departure.

The rest determined to stay on, Gaverigan and Tyrconnel because it amused them, and the rest because they had lost.

"I'm going to punt now," said Pimlico, "who'll take the bank? You, Pigeon? All right! Come on."

Tyrconnel's bank was not so successful as the previous one. Williams and Wilmot got into the habit of announcing their stakes instead of placing them on the table and, at this stage of the night, their memories were often treacherous when they

lost. Pimlico had obtained a raise of the limit to £20 and was staking that sum on each of the even chances every time.

When two o'clock struck, the banker had lost all his winnings and a good deal more besides. Williams and Wilmot, who had now retrieved their losses, expressed great horror at the lateness of the hour and there was a general scurry to get home. Pimlico, Spofforth, and the doctor decided to stay and have a quiet game of poker — 'to steady their nerves', as the doctor phrased it.

Gaverigan, Tyrconnel, Williams and Wilmot parted from the rest outside the college and made their way to Trinity, bemoaning the ticklish interview with the Dean, which this escapade would involve, and it was in a very subdued mood that they huddled together outside the great gate of Trinity, and pulled the porter's bell.

A sudden thought struck Williams and Wilmot simultaneously.

“ We can all get in through one of our windows at the Bishop’s hostel. Run, you fellows, I can hear Hoppett coming to open the gate.”

The two inseparables were round the corner in a trice.

“ I shall stay here,” said Tyrconnel. “ The porter might be suspicious if he opened the door and found no one here.”

“ I don’t suppose I can climb those windows,” said Gaverigan hesitating. “ However, I don’t see why I shouldn’t try,” he added, suddenly making up his mind, as the noise of withdrawing bolts awoke him to a sense of the situation.

The porter was very sleepy or he must have noticed the flutter of Gaverigan’s gown, still well in sight when he opened the door. “ Mr. Tyrconnel again!” he muttered to himself, as he scrutinized the sole remaining undergraduate, ‘when all but he had fled’.

When Gaverigan reached the outside of the

hostel, Williams had already climbed in by the window and Wilmot had got one leg in. The sight of the wall, over eight feet before the bottom of the window was reached, and the great iron bars above, appalled Gaverigan, who, like the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, made it his boast that he never took exercise.

There were two ways in. One was by squeezing round the side of the bars, and was only practicable for a very slim person; the other was through a window two feet square, which only began when the bars ended, some fourteen feet from the ground.

Wilmot was forcing his way through the bars and for some minutes it really seemed as if he would stick there. At last, by a superhuman effort, he wrenched himself through and sprawled into his bedroom head over heels.

Now it was Gaverigan's turn, and Williams peered through the window, telling him again and again how easy it was. And indeed he found it

much easier than he had expected. He flung his cap and gown in first, got his feet on a convenient ledge near the ground, seized hold of the bars and found a drain pipe running down vertically, which helped him up to the window ledge.

“Why, it’s as easy as walking upstairs,” exclaimed Williams triumphantly.

Then came the climb to the upper window, for after Wilmot’s difficulties, Gaverigan hesitated to trust himself to the bars.

He felt that he was in a very disagreeable position and thought of the possibilities of a fall, how the back of his head would cr-rash upon the pavement, how nicely a proctor would catch him if he chanced to come that way, and of a hundred alarming contingencies.

He heard a measured tread in the next street. “Quick,” whispered Williams.

He nerved himself for a desperate effort, swarmed up the bars, got one leg through the top window

and breathed again as he looked down into Wilmot's comfortable bedroom. Then the helping hands of his friends dragged him through and he was safe.

The little window had been smashed into smithers by his boot in the process, but that did not matter; for a very disagreeable encounter with the authorities had been providentially avoided.

“We'll have a bottle of fiz to celebrate the event,” said Wilmot, rubbing his hands.

“All right! And I'll go and get the Pigeon,” put in Williams. “What a fool he was not to come round too!”

“Poor old Pigeon!” said Wilmot, “he'll get it pretty hot from the Dean. I shouldn't wonder if he got sent down.”

“He always does get it hot, somehow or other,” remarked Gaverigan, yawning. “He's too good for this world, bless his old soul!”

CHAPTER V.

GWENDOLEN.

As a crown she had the heavens, where
the angels dwell; her eyes were the white
lotus-flowers, which open to the rising moon;
and her voice was, as it were, the humming
of the bees.

—DHAMMA-CAKKA-PPARATTANA SUTTA.

“So glad to see you, Mr. Coryton—we have heard of you often through Mr. Tyrconnel. I don’t know how it is that we have not made your acquaintance before.”

And Gwendolen Haviland held out her hand with a bright smile of friendly welcome.

Coryton bowed low over the extended hand, white, soft, and slim as a woman's hand should be, with delightful little dimples here and there, and pink-tipped, filbert-shaped nails.

"Mine has been the loss," he murmured. Then suddenly he lifted his eyes and fixed them with bold admiration on the girl's fair face, "How great the loss I never knew till now."

There was something in his look, something in his manner,—she hardly knew what, perhaps it was the bald compliment—which jarred upon Gwendolen. Before it her straightforward purity instinctively recoiled. Yet she was prepared to like Walpole Coryton.

"Ah! you should say those things to my aunt," she laughed, with the same apparent friendliness, no trace of what she felt visible in her manner, "she appreciates them: I do not."

Then, as if to atone for the ungraciousness of her words, she added cordially, "But now that

you have once found your way to us, I hope we shall see you often. You do not know many people here?" she went on, glancing round the room—"No! Let me introduce you to Miss Verity,"—and she indicated a damsel with red hair, a sallow complexion, and limp, sage-green gown, who was sitting on an adjacent chair in an attitude she fondly believed to be early Italian, but which suggested a spinal-curvature instead.

"You ought to get on well together," Gwendolen added mischievously. "You are very clever, Mr. Tyrconnel is always telling me, and she is very clever too—took a first class in all three parts of her Little-Go."

As she said this she turned aside to greet some new-comers, leaving Coryton by the side of the sage-green maiden, faintly conscious of a rebuff. He disliked rebuffs and thenceforward he felt a sort of passive dislike to Gwendolen Haviland too.

Coryton was just entering upon his second year

at Cambridge, but this was his first experience of the queer nondescript thing known as Cambridge Society, that is such society as the wives, daughters, sisters, cousins, and aunts of the University suffer to exist—intensely respectable, intensely dull, intensely exclusive—exclusive of course only in the sense that between the ‘Gown’ and the ‘Town’ there is a great gulf fixed.

Of one phase of this society the gathering was fairly typical. The long, low drawing-room of Professor Haviland’s pretty house on the Newnham Backs was almost inconveniently crowded on this October afternoon. It was the first of Mrs. de Courcy Miles’ At-Homes, which she held on every alternate Wednesday during full term. Here Greek met Greek and the lion lay down with the lamb ; which, shorn of hyperbole, means that here the young blood among the University dons—for there is some young blood even in that effete body—met on neutral ground the eligible undergraduates who

came hither to see Mrs. de Courcy Miles' pretty niece.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles was a sister of the Professor. She had come up to Cambridge ten years before, to take charge of his house and his motherless daughter. And, having come, she remained, while Gwendolen gradually grew up and blossomed into lovely womanhood, and the Professor slowly became mustier and more professorial. But Mrs. de Courcy Miles did not change; she was one of those people with whom time seems to stand still. The bloom on her cheeks deepened a little perhaps—as it will do, for the rouge-pot, like dram-drinking, is apt to grow on one—but her youthful figure was just as youthful as of yore, her skittish laugh just as skittish, her tripping step just as tripping. How she managed it was a mystery. But manage it she did.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles was the widow of a Colonel in the Indian Army, who had gone to Paradise,

said the profane, because he knew he wouldn't meet his wife there. Any way he had gone, and his widow was left lamenting—not at his departure, but at the fact that he had left her nothing but a small pension to live upon. However, it was no use indulging in vain lamentation. She came home and established herself—for her means would allow of nothing better—in Kensington-beyond-Jordan,—a terrible locality without the pale of civilization, where one has to give three shillings to a cabman to drive one to an indigestible dinner. A place where all the people one meets—host and guests alike—rejoice in double-barrelled names, which mark of the beast, as a well-known statesman with a future behind him (who by the way rejoiced in one himself), once remarked, is a synonym for mediocrity and dulness.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles had a double-barrelled name, as suited the *genius loci*—possibly too she was mediocre, but she certainly was not dull, even her

worst enemies could hardly accuse her of that. She silently suffered many things in her dreary suburb until the welcome summons came from Cambridge.

She suppressed all mention of Kensington-beyond-Jordan and gave out boldly that she had been travelling on the Continent. Her arrival took Cambridge society by storm.

The strait-laced wives and daughters of the Professors, Tutors, and Heads of Houses could not understand Mrs. de Courcy Miles at all—and, not understanding her, they regarded her with mingled feelings of envy, curiosity, dislike, and suspicion. But they could not ignore her—the sister of a Regius Professor! Then, too, she possessed a very aggressive individuality of her own. She flaunted her tailor-made garments, her walking-stick, her gaiters, and her youthful make-up in their solemn drawing-rooms, and figuratively snapped her fingers in their faces.

“Positively gaiters, my dear,” sighed the wife of the Dean of King’s to the wife of the Tutor of Jesus’.

“And then her low-cut bodices, positively indecent, my dear,” said the wife of the Senior Proctor, holding up her hands in pious horror, to the wife of the Esquire Bedell—“What a terrible example for that sweet girl!”

But her aunt’s eccentricities did not seem to make any difference to the ‘sweet girl’. Gwendolen Haviland was acknowledged to be the most beautiful girl in Cambridge, and her beauty was heightened by her apparent unconsciousness of the fact. She was not really unconscious of it, of course—no girl can remain in ignorance of what her glass tells her every time she looks into it—but apparently she was so.

She had an oval face, with a colouring like a wild-rose bloom, a perfectly chiselled nose, and a mouth moulded like the mouth of one of Carlo

Dolce's Madonnas. There were great shadowy depths in her brown eyes, and her hair, springing wavily from the roots, was coiled in a loose knot low on the nape of her slender neck. When she stood by the side of the crabbed old Professor, one wondered how such an ill-favoured tree could have borne so fair a blossom. But Gwendolen had inherited her beauty from her mother, and with it a certain religious turn of mind. She looked at life and its duties through the medium of a highly coloured light, and that she did so was certainly not due to any external training—for her father was too much wrapped up in his books to heed her, and her aunt's schooling—such as it was—was all the other way. Her ideas on many things were intolerant and unformed; her horizon was a narrow one, but it had all the thoroughness born of that same narrowness. With her, things were either right or wrong, she knew no middle distance and, though this division is apt sometimes to be

arbitrary in the complex circumstances of modern life, yet there can be no doubt that it greatly simplifies matters for the divider.

Tyrconnel had known her since his first year at Cambridge. He had seen her one evening in the chapel at King's, whither he had gone—as freshmen do go once in a way—to listen to the music. She was standing in one of the massive oaken stalls in the choir, the pale light of the tapers flickering before her, the dark wood-work as a background, the billows and waves of melody, as the choir chanted the *Magnificat*, rising and falling around her.

The face riveted Tyrconnel's attention. It seemed to him the incarnation of 'whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report.'

It haunted him.

As luck would have it, he met her a few days after at an evening party, given by his Tutor's

wife—one of those dismal entertainments known as ‘Perpendiculars’, where well-meaning dons and callow undergraduates mutually bore one another. Mrs. de Courcy Miles’ quick eyes noticed his evident admiration of her niece,—the future Lord Baltin-glass of Blarney was not to be neglected; she bore down upon him; and in a brief time Tyrconnel became a constant visitor at the pretty house on the Newnham Backs.

Gwendolen and he would talk over many things in the dimly-lighted, flower-scented drawing-room, while Mrs. de Courcy Miles dozed over a risky French novel, or kept discreetly out of the way. They became comrades and very good friends. He would show her MSS. of poems and dissertations which he had written; for Tyrconnel had a literary vein, which he had never shown to anyone else, and she would give her opinion with that dogmatic downrightness, which encouraged and yet dissatisfied him.

Gwendolen appealed to all the better impulses of his nature—she was his good genius, so to speak—something shrined away in the inner sanctuary of his heart, too sacred for common mention. It was this feeling which made him hesitate a good deal before introducing Coryton to her, though he often spoke of him. In point of fact he never introduced him. It was Mrs. de Courcy Miles, who came across Coryton at her friend Lady Giddy's house near Henley, during the Long. He was clever, the son of the late Judge-Advocate General, the friend of Lord Pimlico, that dear Mr. Tyrconnel, and a whole host of eligible young men. Mr. Tyrconnel must bring him to call. So he brought him, and here he was.

From his coign of vantage by the Girtonian's chair, Coryton leisurely surveyed the room. He knew several of the men, none of the women. And there were a great many women present, mostly Cambridge pure and simple, but not a few from the

county around. Even the Duchess of Puffeballe had once driven over from her 'place' the other side of the Gog-Magogs and left a card. It henceforth reposed at the top of Mrs. Miles' card-basket for ever.

However much the dons' wives might abuse Mrs. de Courcy Miles, they all agreed that it was right for them to go to her parties.

"Somehow or other she gets such nice men. I can't think how she manages it," said the wife of the Vice-Chancellor, who had a whole tribe of unattractive daughters.

Mrs. Miles' skill in this respect filled with impotent rage and envy the hearts of feminine Cambridge. But those laugh who win, and Mrs. Miles did not mind. Their spite added to her triumph.

"I know they hate me," she wrote to her friend Lady Giddy with whom she had scraped an acquaintance in Simla long ago, "and the feeling, I assure you, is mutual. Meanwhile I smile and eat their

dinners, which are not so bad—in fact one may say of Cambridge that the dinners are good, the dons dull, but the women—my dear Gerty, the women are *awful!* Not a gown but what might have come out of Noah's Ark—and ideas to match."

The would-be æsthetic Girtonian was a little puzzled all this time. The handsome young undergraduate, who had put down her tea-cup and come solemnly back to her chair, did not seem inclined for conversation. Yet she was not of a retiring disposition, she had ventured several sallies but somehow they had fallen flat.

"I think," she began again, tentatively, "I have seen you at Professor Mealie's lectures."

"Oh yes, of course," Coryton said, stifling a yawn, "I remember seeing you there." He hadn't the faintest remembrance of having done so, but that didn't matter. "I do put in one now and then. You were," he hazarded a guess, "at the last one, weren't you?"

"Yes," she rattled on, now fairly started—"I am always there. I wouldn't miss one for worlds. This course about Marlborough is quite too intensely absorbing. The Professor throws such a lurid light on the fallacies of Macaulay, does not he? You are going in for the History Tripos, like myself, I suppose."

"I never go in for anything. I take things as I find them," he said half absently.

At that moment a burst of laughter came from the opposite corner of the room and, turning, he saw Mrs. de Courcy Miles in the centre of a little group smiling towards him. He answered the smile, and catching sight of the Baron von Raggedbach, a Prussian Peer who was at Trinity, standing by, he took him forcibly by the arm and introduced him to the fair Girtonian before he knew where he was.

"The Baron is much interested in the History Tripos," he said, with a charming smile. "I am sure you will find in him a kindred spirit."

And then with a bow he went off, leaving them together. Coryton was never rude to anyone, whether he could get anything out of them or not. But there certainly was nothing to get out of a red-haired young woman, who posed like a bad edition of Ellen Terry and who prosed about her tripos.

"What are you all laughing about?" he asked of Mrs. Miles.

"A story of Mr. Funnie-Ffoulkes," she rejoined, beaming on the little cleric who was holding her teacup. Funnie-Ffoulkes was by way of being a wit. He tried to model himself on Capel and the suave monsignori of the old regime. But Cambridge is not Rome, neither was the drawing-room of Mrs. de Courcy Miles a gilded saloon of the Borghesi. Nor was Funnie-Ffoulkes a monsignore. Far from it. He was only the Dean of St. Bridget's.

"Are you going to Lady Catchbois's dance next week, Mr. Coryton?" inquired Mrs. Miles, changing the conversation.

“I do not know Lady Catchbois.”

“Oh! That is a detail. Mr. Tyrconnel is going, and you are a friend of Mr. Tyrconnel. I will ask her to send you a card.”

“As a friend of Mr. Tyrconnel?” asked Coryton, the corners of his mouth curling upwards ever so slightly.

“No, foolish boy, as a friend of mine of course.”

The little group around them had drifted away. They were almost alone, but not sufficiently alone for the lady’s purpose.

“Come,” and she motioned him to follow her into a queer little recess built out and curtained off at one end of the room—in reality a very deep bay-window. The upper lights were filled with stained glass and there was a *jardinière* filled with crimson tulips and fragrant lilies of the valley.

“This is my chapel,” she said, “at least I call it so, a holy of holies which only my especial

friends are allowed to enter. I hope you appreciate the privilege."

"I should be base indeed if I did not," he answered, seating himself on a low pouffe at her feet.

Really with her back to the light, her 'bloom de Ninon' and her youthful figure neatly clad in a soft mouse-coloured gown trimmed with fur, Mrs. de Courcy Miles might have passed for thirty-five. She didn't feel a day older just now with this handsome youth at her feet looking up into her eyes.

Coryton possessed that caressing manner, which women love, and there was a certain sensuousness about the dark beauty of his face, which perhaps appealed to them even more than his manner.

Mrs. Miles had something to say to him, but she hardly knew how to begin.

"So you will come to Lady Catchbois's?" she said again by way of opening the ball.

"I thought that was settled," he replied blandly.

“Your wishes are my commands. I shall be delighted, since you are going. I should not care to go if you were not.”

Mrs. Miles simpered.

“Flatterer!” and she gave him a tap with her fan.

“One never flatters when one tells the truth.”

“And do you always tell the truth?”

“Oh! always,” he answered, meeting her gaze with frank candour, “unless there is a reason for doing otherwise. It is so much simpler, you know.”

“Quite so, but the reservation is important”

“Ah! dear Mrs. Mallaby, must you be going so soon?” This to the Vice-Chancelloress, who with two overgrown daughters had just come up to say good-bye. “On Thursday is the meeting, is it? And you have secured the Bishop for the address. How delightful—Oh! I shall be *quite* sure to be there. I am lunching at Magdalene Lodge, but I will come on immediately after. Good-bye.”

“That woman,” she said, with a glance at the

retreating figure, "always reminds me of the XXXIX Articles incarnate. Her piety, like her nose, is too aggressive. And yet I have heard it whispered that before she married the Vice-Chancellor—no one quite knows where she came from, you know —she had a *vie orageuse*. And now she is so devout, would you believe it?"

"I should not be surprised. Most women caress penitence after hugging sin," said her companion quietly.

Mrs. Miles lifted her eye-brows with a little jump.

"Where did you pick up that sentiment?" she cried. "You speak quite like a man of experience."

"Experience! What is that?" he asked smilingly. "The name women give their intrigues, is it not?"

His listener lifted her shoulders this time and regarded him in blank amaze. "You are certainly a very unusual undergraduate," she said.

Coryton bent his sleek head, "May I return the

compliment and say that you are a very unusual mistress of a professorial household?" he asked.

Mrs. Miles laughed by way of reply. She did not detect the covert sneer, but she began to think that possibly this youth might not be quite so easily moulded to her purpose as she thought. She did not speak again for a moment. Her eyes wandered absentlȢ across the room.

Coryton followed her glance and an amused smile flitted over his lips as he saw where it rested. Tyrconnel and Gwendolen were sitting side by side. She was talking to him earnestly—almost fervently—and, as he was listening, his face turned towards hers in the softly-shaded lamplight. The shade was not so great but that Coryton could see on his face a look he had never seen there before.

Mrs. Miles turned her head and their eyes met.

"You were thinking"—she began.

"Of the same thing as yourself. Great minds often run in the same direction."

She laughed a little constrainedly.

“Mr. Tyrconnel is often here,” she said, taking up the thread of her thoughts; “he feels quite at home with us now.”

“So it appears,” he replied drily.

“You are, he tells me, his greatest friend. Tell me, do you think?”—here she paused and looked down.

“That he means business?” said Coryton, filling up the hiatus in his most insinuating tones.

Mrs. Miles shot him a swift glance beneath her lowered lids and put her fan up to her mouth.

“You are very frank,” she said—“brutally so, in fact.”

“We live in a brutal age,” he answered, with a charming smile; “did I not say I always told the truth? But I have not answered your question—oh! yes,” he went on, with playful protest, “that was your question surely? Well, since you ask me, I think he does.”

A pleased light shone in his companion's eyes.

"What makes you think so?" she asked.

"Because he says so little about her, for one thing; because he sees so much of her, for another.

Two sure signs of a woman's influence."

"Well—well," said Mrs. Miles, with a pious air, "I cannot say that I disapprove. He is a young man of very high principles."

"High principles," echoed Coryton with an air of candid innocence. "High principles are synonymous with high teas, cold dinners on Sunday, missionary meetings, and such like middle-class virtues, are they not? Well—" he pursued, shrugging his shoulders, "I do not know about his high principles, they are too abstract for me to deal with, but without doubt he is the only son of Lord Baltinglass of Blarney and heir to his wealth. Those are concrete advantages enough. But these little affairs are not all on one side. What does Miss Haviland say?"

Mrs. Miles shook her head; it suited her to ignore the earlier part of Coryton's remarks.

"I cannot say," she said presently. "Gwendolen is not an ordinary girl. One cannot judge her by ordinary rules. You see I am a mother to her."— ("Heavens!" thought Coryton, "what a mother!")—"and a father also, one might say, for the Professor, though great on the differential calculus, is as ignorant as a child in affairs of the heart, or"—noticing a faint smile on her companion's face—"of the world. One must leave things to take their course and hope for the best. One only wishes for their happiness.... I am so glad to have had the opportunity of talking with you, Mr. Coryton. You are so clever and, do you know?—I value your opinion very highly."

Coryton bowed low.

"And now," she said rising, "I really must look after my guests. They will be wondering what has become of me. Don't forget about Lady Catchbois's

party, and will you come and dine with us first? Mr. Tyrconnel is coming, and then we can all go on to the dance together."

"What fools women are, even the cleverest of them!—in fact the cleverer they are, the more easy they are to fool," thought Coryton, as he murmured his thanks. "Does this old woman seriously think that I am going to further her clumsy game, run the risk of angering Lord Baltinglass and of losing my useful friend—for that girl's influence would be the death of mine—in return for a few twopenny-halfpenny compliments, a badly-cooked dinner, and a second-rate dance? Not if I know it."

"Well, Pigeon," he said later, as they were walking homeward together across the Backs, "you seemed to be going it pretty strong this afternoon. You'd better have a care or you'll burn your fingers before you know where you are: that old woman wants to nab the future Lord Baltinglass of Blarney for her pretty niece."

Tyrconnel laughed uneasily and kicked the dead leaves beneath his feet. The 'fire of the autumn' had pretty well burnt itself out by this time, the leaves lay in a golden shower beneath the great elms, whose branches, bare for the most part, stretched weirdly athwart the leaden-hued October sky. The air was laden with the pungent odour of rotting leaves.

"You mean Mrs. de Courcy Miles, I suppose?" he said at last.

"Oh! is that her name? I had forgotten it. Don't go too far. Remember, what would Vixie say?"

A red flush burnt itself on Tyrconnel's cheek, hardly visible to his companion in the fading light.

"I don't think Vixie would mind," he said awkwardly, "I don't think she cares—besides, Gwendolen Haviland is so different to Vixie, you know."

"Quite so, like a cup of cold water after a highly spiced draught. Cold water is an excellent thing, but it is apt to pall on the palate if one

take too much of it. By the way, what was your guardian angel talking to you about so earnestly this afternoon?"

"She was only saying what she has often said before, that *noblesse oblige*, you know,—that life is full of opportunities for good—that one ought not to waste one's energies simply on selfish pleasures, and all that sort of thing—and—by Jove! Coryton," he wound up, with an energetic swish of his stick through the air, "I believe she is right."

"Perfectly right," said Coryton calmly, "obviously right. One has heard something very like it all before, but that does not matter; it is better to repeat old things well than to invent new ones—and much easier. I often do it myself. What else did she say?"

"I cannot tell you," answered the other doggedly, "You do not understand—at least, you *will* not. You would only make a joke of it all, and I—I do not care to joke about Gwendolen Haviland.

She looks at things in a very different light to you and me. She is a religious girl."

Coryton checked the laugh which rose to his lips. It was as well his friend could not see his face. They crossed the river and walked on a little way in silence.

"Religion is an excellent thing—in woman," he said meditatively, "all women should have a devotional vein running through them; it is such a comfort to them, and it helps to pass the time. A free-thinking woman is an abomination, she jars on one's sense of the fitness of things. Yes, certainly, all women should have a touch of religion."

"You are not arguing that religion is only meant for women, are you?"

"Oh! certainly not. Religion is very useful to men, both in this world and the next. It is a very powerful lever, they are only fools who ignore it. Never say anything against religion, my dear Pigeon, if you wish to prosper."

“ You are incorrigible,” said his friend, laughing in spite of himself. “ You upset all one’s preconceived ideas of right and wrong, and yet somehow one believes in you and likes you all the time. How do you manage it, I wonder? ”

“ Possibly because I always say what is passing in my mind—the things which other people think. Frankness consists in telling the truth—but not always the whole truth,” he added.

But his companion did not hear the reservation.

“ I don’t believe you are half as bad as you make yourself out,” he said.

“ The devil is not as black as he is painted,” quoted Coryton. “ But then he doesn’t paint himself.”

They had walked up Mill-Lane and were on the quaint K.P. by this time. The square old Saxon tower of St. Benet’s loomed behind; the horizon in front was blurred by the hideous, *hôtel-de-ville* façade of Caius. The lamps were lighted, and the

shop windows, full of gaudy blazers, groups of photographs and pictures, wore a festive air.

A little crowd—chiefly women—was emerging from the pinnacled gateway of King's. Evensong in the Chapel, which does duty at Cambridge for a Cathedral service, was just over, and the boom of the great organ could be heard faintly sounding across the court. Coryton, followed by Tyrconnel, turned into Bessie Masterman's—‘the freshman's snare’—and bought some cigars.

“ Well, what shall we do to kill the time?” he queried when they came out again—A flirtation with Bessie had long ago lost its charms for him—“ You are going to the Caledonian dinner to-night, aren't you? Forbes has asked me, too. But that's not till eight o'clock. Let us turn into Barrett's and have a game of billiards.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE APOSTLES.

Cherchons donc à voir les choses comme
elles sont, et n'ayons pas plus d'esprit
que le bon Dieu. —FLAUBERT.

THE undergraduate with literary aspirations is about as precocious and insufferable a prig as may be found in the whole republic of letters. His ideas are suburban rather than of Grub-street ; his idols are underdone poets and incomprehensible essayists ; his principles are the give and take of inept admiration ; the goal of his ambitions is to take a high degree, go to London, and be elected a member of the Savile Club.

The most pretentious coterie for such young men at Cambridge is a highly exclusive society known as the Chit-Chat. It meets once a week in the rooms of all the members in turn, when the host reads a dogmatic paper on a subject of frivolous solemnity and the other members discuss it. Punch is brewed, dried fruits are consumed, and the club snuff-box is handed round. Every member is bound by honour and tradition to consider all the other members '*frightfully clever*' and to speak to outsiders with bated breath of his membership as the greatest honour which the University had to bestow.

Stay, there is a greater honour yet, but it is too supreme even to be whispered in the ears of the profane. The Chit-Chat has an inner circle, consisting only of the twelve most *frightfully clever* men in the University. They modestly style themselves 'The Apostles' and are theoretically only known to each other in that capacity, though they

usually take precious good care that the secret shall be only a secret of Polichinelle.

The Chit-Chat and the Apostles have been in existence to minister to the vanity of at least three or four generations of undergraduates, but the sluggish Cam still flows on unfired.

“I want you to reserve me Sunday evening, dear boy,” said Coryton to Gaverigan as they walked home together from a card-party at Williams’ and Wilmot’s rooms.

“By all means. What is it? Poker in your rooms or a prayer-meeting in Victor Sexton’s, O thou man of many wiles?”

“No, an infinitely funnier study in human nature than either.”

“Human nature! That means vice or something equally humdrum, doesn’t it? To my mind ‘human nature’ is a contradiction in terms. Anything nakedly natural disgusts me. What is there so repulsive as a human being, who seeks to be natural and

consequently only succeeds in being foolish?"

"For my part," returned Coryton smiling, "I prefer natural people. One knows just what they will do under given circumstances and one can plan accordingly. But then I am a student of fools, a morologist—to coin a word."

"You are quite right to study fools, if what you labour for is success. For my part I don't believe that anything is worth while. There is no heaven save pleasure, and no hell save satiety."

"But all pleasures are of nature: from women to 'wittles'. Success is my greatest pleasure and that is why I pursue it."

"Philistine! Success is the triumph of art over nature. There is no pleasure in anything where nature has not been completely overshrouded by art. Natural food means bananas or raw potatoes washed down by rainwater. It is to art that we owe our tournedos Rossini and Mouton Rothschild 1874. But you haven't told me what you propose for next Sunday."

“I want you to come to a meeting of the Chit-Chat.”

“Why, what on earth is taking you there?”

“I am a member.”

Gaverigan looked at Coryton with a curious smile and whistled softly to himself.

“Whew! You are a marvel! Is there a single pie in the whole 'Varsity, where you haven't got your thumb? But why bother your head about such small fry? They can be of little enough use here and none hereafter.”

“Everyone has his uses—down to the President of the Catt's debating society. But will you come? They want to elect you a member, but you needn't accept unless you like.”

“And I am to come for inspection, as Mauresk did last week. All right, but I won't promise to be on my good behaviour.”

“No one would ever expect that of you. Mauresk made a very good story out of his inspection.

The show isn't quite so funny as all that. Still it may amuse you, and I know you only live to be amused."

When Sunday came, Gaverigan had forgotten all about the Chit-Chat and was lying comfortably at full length before his fire, enjoying his greatest pleasure of doing absolutely nothing, when Coryton burst in on him like an avalanche.

" You are a nice chap!" he exclaimed. " The Chit-Chat has been waiting for you half an hour--a thing utterly unheard of in its whole history. You are really too provoking."

" My good chap," returned Gaverigan, scarcely turning at his entrance, " I wish you wouldn't burst in like the North wind. You have chilled me to the marrow. I vow I won't stir an inch until you have pledged me in a bumper of this port. It's really not bad—for Cambridge."

" All right, but for Heaven's sake, hurry up!"

" Well, where are we to go?" said Gaverigan

gloomily, "I sincerely wish I hadn't said I'd come."

"It's in the rooms of a man named MacRonald in the Old Court. He's really rather a clever chap. Older than most undergrads. Came up from Glasgow University or some such place. Wears a truculent yellow moustache. Never came nearer civilization than Newcastle before his matriculation here and yet has passable manners—outrageously artificial, of course, but then you like artificial things."

"He's '*frightfully* clever', I suppose, like all the rest of them?"

The rooms were very large, like all those in the Old Court at Trinity. Oak panelling gave them a certain air of solid wealth, which was not borne out by the sparse and rather gimcrack furniture, evidently intended for an aspiration after new-fangled art by one who did not quite understand it. A long table in the centre of the room was

covered with coffee cups of all sorts and conditions of patterns, which conveyed the impression that 'alas, master, they were borrowed.'

MacRonald came up smiling, with one hand grasping an end of his Randolphian mustachio. He had cultivated very carefully the appearance of being entirely at his ease on all occasions, and had succeeded in acquiring it to the satisfaction of superficial observers. Coryton used to say that his manners were those of a man who is always in expectation of being kicked downstairs, but then Coryton was a keener observer than most people.

"It is a great pleasure and honour to see you under my poor roof," MacRonald said to Gaverigan, with what he fancied was old-fashioned politeness; "we had half begun to fear we were forgotten."

"Forgotten! 'Twere impossible to forget the high honour of this invitation. I fear me I am not so punctual as is my wont," returned Gaverigan

imitating MacRonald. But the humour—as usual—was lost upon the Scotsman.

“I found him sitting over the fire with a bottle of port,” put in Coryton brutally.

The procedure at a meeting of the Chit-Chat is to devote the first hour to conversation, or ‘chit-chatting’,—whatever that may be—then to proceed to the election of new members, and to wind up with a paper read by the host.

MacRonald’s idea of entertaining had the merit of simplicity. Directly a man came in, he would take him to somebody, introduce them and plant them on a sofa or two chairs close together. Before ten minutes were up, he would pounce upon the man again, whisper in his ear ‘I want to introduce you to So and So’ and carry him off to a tête-à-tête with somebody else. There was a game of General Post going on all the time and MacRonald certainly shewed skill in never leaving anybody by himself, or with a man who evidently

bored him. At a pinch he would even go further and suggest subjects when the conversation seemed to be flagging.

MacRonald first introduced Gaverigan to an effeminate young man named Freeman. His father was a partner in a well-known firm of wholesale haberdashers, and had thought to turn his son into a gentleman by sending him to a public school and university. The result had been a curious hybrid, in which the shopwalker strain struggled with the veneer of gentility. Freeman had no notion how to talk or where to place his hands and feet, but he had a gushing, almost girlish, disposition, and was liked by people when they got to know him. He was good-looking, almost aristocratic-looking, with a Roman nose and slight, well-curled moustache, and so long as he did not open his mouth, he made an impression on a stranger. He had what members of his father's firm would have called a 'good address', which was only

rendered tolerable by his intuitive preference for the eloquence of silence. Like so many who have alloyed a pretentious education with middle-class home-life, he had no sense of proportion, mistook for sentiment what was only mawkishness and for philanthropy what was but foolery. He was eaten up with fads, from socialism and esoteric Buddhism to long hair and vegetable foods.

Gaverigan took to him at once. The great quality to him in an acquaintance was that he should be a good audience, and that was Freeman's strong point. Finding that he had a faddist to deal with, Gaverigan poured into his willing ears archaic individualism and epicurean theories, and he was just completing the process of captivating the impressionable youth by avowing a belief in astrology, when MacRonald came up and whispered in his ear that he was anxious to introduce him to Thomas Llewelyn Morgan. This was whispered with some pomposity, as though the

proposition were an unusually advantageous one.

“I have known him ever since I was a boy,” said Gaverigan, following his host, though he hated Morgan, “his father was up here with mine once upon a time.”

Gaverigan at once rose several feet in MacRonald’s estimation, for Thomas Llewelyn Morgan was a shining light in this coterie and was even whispered to be of the mysterious inner circle,—the Apostles!

They found him seated on a window-seat, dis-
coursing atheism to a select circle of admirers.
“The Bible,” he was saying, “is not only a mass
of inconsistencies and absurdities, but such hopelessly
dull reading, such dismally bad literature.”

“There I don’t agree with you,” said a man
named Emery, who was a Positivist by creed and
an editor of the *Cambridge Review* by profession,
and therefore of course an authority both on religion
and literature. “The Bible isn’t half a bad book

if one can once get rid of his prejudice against it. People who have had it crammed down their throats during childhood can't be expected to approach it impartially. I have had it bound in yellow calf and really, when I come to peruse it like that, I find it far better reading than either the Talmud or *Omar Kayam*."

"What title did you put on the cover?" asked Morgan contemptuously. "Perhaps if you spelt Bible with a little *b*, it might serve."

"I haven't put a title on yet. I want a good one, if anybody has ideas."

"Of course we all have ideas," said a man called Belgium indignantly, and he scratched a red shock head, without, however, eliciting any.

"Poems and Fables of the Semites," suggested Gaverigan in a still, small voice.

A delighted shiver passed through the little audience, and MacRonald rubbed his long bony hands with glee, as he trotted off to arrange further

introductions. Morgan looked sulky at being eclipsed on his own territory.

Coryton had been very much bored meanwhile, talking to one of the most precious of the Apostles, a colourless young man named W. P. Jones, known to the intellectual circles of Cambridge as 'W. P.' and whose '*frightful* cleverness' consisted merely in a knack of passing examinations in Latin and Greek. He had a thin, husky voice, which he used in the most supercilious way, as if it were amazing condescension to consent to speak at all. He was insignificant-looking, with a pug nose and mutton-chop whiskers, but it was the custom of the Chit-Chat to take men at their own valuation, and his was an unusually high one even for these select circles.

Coryton had been flattering him more unblushingly even than his wont, and was beginning to wonder whether there was anything he would not swallow. He had told him with what engrossing

interest he had read his article on Pindar in the *Cambridge Review*; he had alluded to him to his face as the cleverest man in the 'Varsity; he had even hinted at unparalleled personal beauty, and suggested the Chit-Chat paying a first-class artist to paint his portrait,—but the man had accepted it all as gospel, without turning a hair.

Coryton was beginning to admit that his powers of blarney must at last have reached their limit, when a welcome relief was afforded by MacRonald taking him away for introduction to Mr. Scott, whom Coryton had heard much about, but somehow had not yet met.

Mr. Scott gave what turned out to be somebody else's lectures in English literature in the hall of Trinity College some half a dozen times a term, to a select audience of Cambridge Apostles and Newnham disciples. The Chit-Chat swore by him, and probably contributed to his vogue. In London, despite persistent logrolling in the *Lick-*

worm Gazette, he was only known as the writer of washy sonnets of doubtful scansion and as the editor of certain English classics, which required no editing. At Cambridge he was Sir Oracle to a great number of crude young men. He was a podgy little person with glutinous hands, one of which he placed in Coryton's without the least attempt at pressure.

"I am very pleased indeed to make your acquaintance," he said, in an oily voice. "I think I have seen you sometimes at my lectures."

Coryton took the cue and began to express his enjoyment of them, though in reality he had never been there. "I was especially interested in what you said about Milton," he said, "though I confess I do not entirely share your admiration of him."

Mr. Scott's face gathered into a frown. Then he smiled pityingly and said, "Let me hear what you have to say," in the tone of a master asking a lower boy to show cause why he shall not be flogged.

“I take Voltaire’s view,” said Coryton boldly, for he was getting tired of heaping Pelion on Ossa in flattery of tenth-rate prigs; “he accused Milton of obscurity, unnecessary length, and entire absence of interest, and he pointed out that he was despised by his contemporaries.”

Mr. Scott gasped at what seemed to him sheer blasphemy and was about to administer a reproof, when a movement in the room gave warning that the proceedings were going to begin, and everyone settled himself to attention.

“Our first business,” said Thomas Llewelyn Morgan, the secretary, with more than the solemnity of a cabinet minister, “is to proceed to the election of new members. I hope it is understood by strangers present,” and here he looked bilyiously at Gaverigan, “that our proceedings are strictly private. If any stranger does not consider himself bound in honour to treat them as such, I have to request that he will withdraw.”

He made a long, awkward pause to enable Gaverigan to do so, but as the latter made no move, he proceeded to read out the names of the candidates proposed.

MacRonald took advantage of the pause to whisper in Gaverigan's ear, "That warning is on account of Mauresk. He behaved in a most ungentlemanly way. Came as our guest. Accepted our hospitality. And then went about everywhere, telling the most extravagant tales about what we did."

"Ha ! ha ! ha ! Mauresk is not a respecter of persons," laughed Gaverigan.

"No, but one imagined he was a gentleman," returned the Scotsman severely.

"Mr. Mauresk of King's College," Morgan was reading, "proposed by Mr. W. P. Jones of Trinity College and seconded by Mr. Drake of King's, has been withdrawn."

The announcement was greeted with ironical cheers, in which Gaverigan and Coryton, who knew

that Mauresk would never have accepted election at the hands of this society, joined heartily.

“Mr. Bertram Paine of Trinity College is proposed by Mr. MacRonald of Trinity and seconded by Mr. Edward Freeman of the same college,” pursued the inexorable Secretary.

There was a pause, while the Chit-Chats pondered among themselves who should cast the first stone.

“Is he *frightfully* clever?” asked a man named Crust presently, sniffing the air.

“I don’t think he scintillates particularly,” said an overgrown King’s man named Drake, his thick lips quivering nervously as he tried to think of a joke and failed.

“He wrote some *frightfully* clever articles in my paper, the *May-Bug*,” said MacRonald with some humility, “and really he did coruscate the night he came on approval.”

“Heavens!” whispered Gaverigan to Coryton.

“I trust I am not here ‘on approval’. Are they all watching to see whether I ‘scintillate’ or ‘coruscate’?”

“No, be quiet. You are watching them to see what funny things they do.”

“And he isn’t going in for the classical tripos,” growled The MacSnorter. “I don’t believe anyone can be *frightfully* clever who doesn’t. Paine is a history-man I think.”

“Yes,” assented Chortle, “a man whose intellect is nourished on history only is like a boy brought up to eat nothing but bath-buns. Both necessarily lack stamina.”

After a long discussion in a similar strain, it was decided to defer the election to next term, and MacRonald proceeded to read his paper. It was not devoid of cleverness, though weighed down by Scottish conceptions of humour. It was entitled ‘The Riddle of Life’ and consisted of emasculated Rabelaisian language, with a few aphorisms modelled

on Voltaire peeping out every now and then like truffles in *pâté de foie gras*.

The aphorisms, which were evidently meant to be the strong point of the paper, were of the kind which prompts men to exclaim 'How true!' rather than 'How strange!'

'*When a woman weeps, she is about to deceive; when she smiles she has betrayed.*'

'*Reputations,—like men,—are born of women, and women are not hard to deceive.*'

'*When you say "Good-bye, Colonel" in America, every man within hearing distance takes off his hat; if you exclaimed "Pretty scamp!" in a London drawing-room, every woman would curtsey.*'

'*An amorous man is amorous to his friend's wife.*'

'*Love is the distemper of humans.*'

'*The man who has a beautiful wife never lacks friends.*'

'*A philosopher is one who asks other people*

questions to the end that he may answer them himself.'

And so on.

Signals for applause were never neglected. "Wonderful!" Drake would gasp to The MacSnorter; "Frightfully clever!" Quid, the Johnian history Lecturer, would telegraph with his eyes to Charles of King's; "Ripping!" was the comment of Belgium, who had not yet got into the Chit-Chat jargon.

Coryton's face was that of a sphinx all the time, neither enthusiastic nor bored, but when the essay came to an end in a splutter of scarcely intelligible fireworks, he was the first to rush up and congratulate the author with dulcet emphasis.

A desultory discussion followed, and then the assembly of prigs gradually melted away across the great court in twos and threes, still keeping up their priggish conversation.

As Coryton and Gaverigan walked across the court together, the latter asked,

“ What are they all going to get out of this, do you suppose? ”

“ Mutual admiration here,” replied the other with a shrug of his shoulders, “ and universal contempt hereafter.”

“ But they are all coming men, aren’t they? ” said Gaverigan laughing.

“ Coming men who never come. Or if they come at all, it will be as third-rate ushers in fourth-rate schools, quill-driving clerks, or literate ‘ghosts’ for illiterate hacks and quacks, doomed to spend their lives flitting on the top of a ‘bus between the suburbs and the British Museum.”

The which in point of fact they did.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE MAY WEEK.

Talk to women as much as you can. This is the best school. This is the way to gain fluency, because you need not care what you say, and had better not be sensible.

—B. DISRAELI.

LADY GIDDY had brought Violet Tresillian to spend the 'May week',—so called because it is in the middle of June—at the house of Mrs. de Courcy Miles. Coryton, Tyrconnel, Gaverigan, and Lord Pimlico were asked to meet them at dinner and take them on to the First Trinity Ball afterwards. Lady Giddy was an old friend of Mrs.

Miles—at least to all outward appearances. But it was the sort of armed friendship, founded on knowing too much, in which there is no love lost.

Mrs. Miles had had to scheme and manœuvre with even more than her usual dexterity to get Violet up. For some reason or other everybody assumed that she was a great heiress and, as she was a 'devilish pretty girl' into the bargain, she was in great request among hostesses.

Violet had quite determined to come up to Cambridge for the May week and did not care much where she stayed. Lady Giddy thought it would be better fun to take a suite of rooms at the Bull, but Mrs. Miles made such a point of it and put on the screw so mercilessly, that at length she had to give way.

The dinner-party was quite a success, everybody being in the highest spirits. Coryton took in Miss Haviland, with whom he was now intimate after a fashion. They always treated each other with

cordiality and had even got to discussing questions of ethics in a way which tickled Coryton immensely, when he thought over it afterwards. But each was more than half conscious of a lurking dislike in the mind of the other.

Tyrconnel sat between Gwendolen and Violet. The dinner bored Violet. The Professor, who was on her other side, made it his business to 'draw her out' and, though that was a process she was always very clever at baffling, it prevented her monopolizing Tyrconnel as she had intended doing. He too, tiresome boy, seemed at first to have no eyes or ears for anyone but Gwendolen. However, before the entrée was reached, Violet contrived to telegraph instructions to Coryton.

He, understanding her wishes almost before they were expressed, engaged Gwendolen in a discussion on Puseyism, a subject which interested her so much that she left Tyrconnel's last remark about cotillons unanswered and turned right round in

her chair to thrash the question out thoroughly with Coryton. Violet pounced on her opportunity, as a cat might pounce on a mouse, failed to hear the Professor's question about the 'Ballad of Lord Bate-man', which he had given her to read, and proceeded to win back Tyrconnel to her humble service.

"You bad Pigeon," she said, shaking a finger at him, "you haven't spoken more than three words to me since you came in, and we haven't met for at least nine months. Are you huffy with me, or what?"

"I was talking to Gwen," he answered sulkily.

"Yes, Gwen tells me that you and she are great allies," she said, without a shade of annoyance in her tones; "she seems an awfully sweet girl, which is unusual in such a beauty."

The Pigeon was mollified at once. The next best thing to talking to Gwendolen was talking about her, and his heart warmed to Violet for her appreciation of his idol.

"Do you really think so?" he exclaimed, "I—I

didn't think you would care much about her."

"Why do you think so badly of me, Pigeon?" she asked in low, sad tones, looking him full in the face with big glistening eyes.

"I am a beast, Vixie," he said, after a long pause, feeling that he had been very rude and unjust and disagreeable; "I didn't mean to be nasty to you, only you see I am a good deal changed since we used to know each other. I am beginning to see that life is a serious thing and I am half afraid—more than half afraid—that we shall never be the friends we were."

"Oh! Pigeon, don't say that. We will always be friends."

"Yes, but I know you don't like serious people. I have often heard you say that serious people are like soda water, either flat or flatulent, according to their age."

"For pity's sake, don't murder my epigrams like that."

"And you said a serious young man was like a rotten egg, offensive to his surroundings from overhatching and serviceable only for political meetings."

Violet burst into a ripple of laughter.

"This is *too* killing," she said, leaning back in her chair,—"the Pigeon to be taken seriously, the Pigeon in the *rôle* of 'the good young man who died'! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"What are you two making so merry over?" inquired Lady Giddy, speaking across the Professor, whom it was everybody's habit to ignore and who had not been spoken to for over twenty minutes.

"Pidge has been telling me that parody of Mr. Warton's about 'the grand old man who lied,'" said Violet hastily.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles pricked up her ears and asked to have it repeated, but Tyrconnel was so evidently confused and annoyed that she did not press the point and a diversion was speedily made

by the Professor, who was in a great hurry to take advantage of the general lull in the conversation, in order to hear his own voice again.

“ Well, Miss Tresillian,” he said, in the loud tones habitual to the deaf, “ and what did you think of the ‘Ballad of Lord Bateman’? I think you know the present holder of the title. If you are likely to be seeing him soon, I hope you will do me the favour of accepting the copy I have lent you, in case you have an opportunity of showing it to him.”

Violet expressed her thanks in the language of nods and smiles and then turned again to Tyrconnel, who still looked hot and disconcerted.

“ You mustn’t be annoyed with me for being amused, Pigeon,” she said, in the soft voice which he had never been able to resist; “ you made your announcement with such a melodramatic air, it quite took my breath away. Of course, as we grow older, we all of us find life more serious,

I expect you will find me a good deal changed too, when we have had a few quiet talks."

Tyrconnel looked up in great surprise and his old devotion to Violet came back with a rush. She, too, had pondered and wondered over the dark problems of life and had been through the deep waters. He longed to hear from her lips the result she had arrived at. Gwendolen was all very well as a spiritual guide, but she had always been one of the serious ones of the earth and could not make allowances for the old Adam of a character, to whom excitement was one of the conditions of existence. She was often provoking by the inflexibility of her 'counsels of perfection'. Violet, with a desire to do right thrown in, would be indeed a comrade.

Violet read in his look that she had hooked her fish and at once began to throw her flies in other directions.

"Now, Mr. Gaverigan," she said to her *vis-à-*

vis, "I am going to turn the tables on you. What are you and Lady Giddy enjoying so richly? I have been talking very seriously to Mr. Tyrconnel and now I really do want to be amused."

"It's only a little tale about Coryton."

"How very odd," said Mrs. de Courcy Miles from the other end of the table; "Lord Pimlico has also just been telling me a funny tale about Mr. Coryton."

Mrs. de Courcy Miles had a knack of always keeping one ear open for any conversation in which Lady Giddy was, however remotely, engaged.

"Oh! come now," exclaimed Coryton, laughing unmirthfully, "I think I shall begin to tell funny tales about you fellows. Mrs. de Courcy Miles, did you ever hear the strange story of Lord Pimlico, the drag, the fair lady, and the Proctor?"

"No. We'll have a scandal-bee. Everybody think of a startling story about everybody else."

"Shall I begin, my dear?" inquired Lady Giddy

in suave tones, which were intended to give her hostess an unfriendly warning.

"No," replied that lady coldly. "I see Lord Pimlico has something on the tip of his tongue."

"It's nothing much," said Pimlico, speaking hurriedly, "only about the last time Coryton and I went over to Newmarket together. On the platform a bobby told us we'd been spotted by sharpers. S'pose they thought we looked mugs. Anyhow, when the train started, there they all were and great fun we had listening to 'em. I was in one corner and Corry in the corner furthest off. Imagine my amazement, after about ten minutes, to see him stretch out a sovereign and bet he could spot the lady. Of course he lost. Then he turned crusty and wouldn't bet any more, which amused the boys hugely. I thought, 'Well, he's lost his quid and there's an end of it.' But not a bit of it! At the first stoppage out he got. I sat in my corner saying nothing, without the faintest idea

what he was up to, but I noticed the boys were a bit uneasy. Presently back comes Coryton with a couple of bobbies and a guard and a porter or two—quite a gang of 'em. In the quietest way in the world he points to the josser next me, who had won his money, and says, 'That's the man.' 'Wot d'yer mean?' he answers. 'You know well enough,' says the bobby, 'you've been cheating this gentleman out of his money.' 'Not a bit of it,' he answers, trying to bluster, 'we only 'ad a little game o' kyards.' 'All right,' sings out the bobby, and then he turns to Corry and says, 'D'you want to give him in charge?' 'No,' says Corry, 'I only want my money back.' 'Very generous of yer, I'm sure,' says the man, with a murderous look, whipping out a handful of sovereigns and giving him one. Then I thought it was about time to clear out, so Corry and I travelled in the guard's van the rest of the way, and Corry was in a blue funk of being ducked in a horsepond as

a welsher all the while he was at Newmarket. He told me afterwards that he'd been taken in by the dodge of turning down the corner and really believed he was going to cheat the man when he betted with him."

"Oh! come now," protested Lady Giddy, "you are all giving poor Mr. Coryton a very bad character. I don't believe he's anything like so black as you paint him."

Now this was precisely the opinion which Coryton had been diligently striving to implant in Gwendolen's mind all through dinner, and not without success.

"I believe, Mr. Coryton," she said impulsively, "that you are ashamed of your good impulses and that all the cynicism you impart to your conversation is merely to conceal your natural kindliness and generosity."

"You exaggerate my poor merits," he said with humility.

“No, and I feel I owe you an apology for having misjudged you. It is as well to be quite frank. I thought you exercised a bad influence over Mr. Tyrconnel, and I felt it my duty to advise him not to confide too implicitly in you. He has a blind belief in you, Mr. Coryton, and he is very young for his years.”

“And you think I take advantage of his innocence for my own ends,” said Coryton with a curious smile.

“You must not judge me too harshly. I feel that I was too hasty in coming to my conclusions,” she said, in a slow, painful way. “It will be a lesson to me. I will explain my mistake to him and I trust that you will consent to our being friends in future—real friends I mean.”

There was a look of triumph in Coryton’s eyes.

“My dear Miss Haviland,” he said, “I have never desired anything better. But may I not suggest that you are in perhaps too great a hurry to believe in my immaculate intentions? You may

change your view about me just as rapidly again to-morrow and that will be awkward now that we have sworn eternal friendship."

She did not notice the sneer that just flavoured his remarks, like the tiniest suspicion of garlic in a salad; for she was in a very serious mood, and when she was in a serious mood, she always fancied everyone else was serious too.

"I have done wrong," she said contritely. "I know it is very wrong to be so quick to think evil of anyone. The fact is, I had never met people who tried to make themselves out worse than they are. It is all new to me,"—she looked up at him with a half smile,—"I hope you will forgive me."

"It is I who have to ask forgiveness, if I have unwittingly deceived you," he said, with a profound bow.

"Do look at the way that little ecclesiastic has been crumbling his bread." Lady Giddy was whispering to Gaverigan, as she pointed to Fannie-Ffoulkes;

“ he seems terribly nervous under the fire of Miss Connecticut’s chaff.”

“ Like Sidney Smith,” replied Gaverigan, laughing. “ Don’t you remember he said ‘ I always crumble my bread when I sit next to a bishop; and when I am next to an archbishop, I crumble it with both my hands.’ ”

“ No, I don’t remember, you rude boy; I wasn’t going out to dinner parties in the days of Sidney Smith. You are really getting as frank as Mr. Tyrconnel in telling one exactly what you think.”

“ One needn’t have been there to remember a story, any more than the little boys who sing a ribald distich on the fifth of November were present at Guy Fawkes’ execution.”

“ Now you are coming round to your Legitimist doctrines and you know they bore me. It all happened so very long ago.”

“ Well, now you will escape being bored any more,” he said, rising, as Mrs. de Courcy Miles, having

at last succeeded in catching Lady Giddy's eye, was pushing back her chair noisily and flouncing towards the door.

When the ladies reached the drawing-room, Mrs. Miles carried off the American girl to her 'Holy of Holies' and Violet, who wanted a private talk with Gwendolen, expressed an eager desire to hear Lady Giddy's new Spanish-guitar songs.

"You won't get her to sing until the men come in," said Mrs. Miles, standing behind a sofa, with her arm in Miss Connecticut's, as a preliminary to carrying off that unwilling young lady.

"Oh, yes, why not?" said Lady Giddy, getting up to fetch her instrument. She always liked to disappoint her dear friend Mrs. Miles, if she could.

"Well, it'll be practice for you, I daresay," said the latter, carrying off her prey.

Lady Giddy sought out her guitar and fondly spread out the array of ribbons of many colours attached to the instrument, each of which she boasted

represented a separate conquest. The whole array served to suggest a small regiment of admirers, but Mrs. de Courcy Miles' story was that they had all been bought one morning at Marshall & Snelgrove's by Lady Giddy herself.

That lady was soon trolling forth a song about the *Bolero*; Miss Verity was skilfully isolated behind a palm-pot by Violet, and Gwendolen found herself let in for one of the 'private and confidential' conversations, which she was so fond of inflicting upon her undergraduate friends.

Violet began with a torrent of gush, which experience had taught her was best suited for a *tête-à-tête* with a goody-goody girl.

"I have been longing for a quiet chat with you, my dear Gwendolen,—I may call you Gwendolen, mayn't I? I have heard so much about you during the last two years, and it is strange, isn't it, that we have never met before? Now we really must make up for lost time and I am going to be

frightfully fond of you and see such a lot of you, if you will let me."

Gwendolen was completely taken aback. She had not been attracted by Violet, in fact had begun with a slight instinctive antipathy, which she had fancied from the first was returned. But her loyal nature had prompted her to check the unfriendly feelings almost as soon as they were formed, and her recent revulsion of feeling about Coryton had put her in the frame of mind that is inclined to think the best of everybody.

Violet had two objects in view; she wanted to make Gwendolen fond of her—that was always good policy and it cost so little effort; but above all she wanted to find out how far the girl had entangled Tyrconnel. Keeping to her usual tactics, she kept the subject she had in view until the last, mentioning and discussing first all their other friends in an animated way, taking care to say amiable things about everybody.

She approached the subject of Coryton with a good deal of diffidence, as she had understood from him that he was not popular in this quarter. However, to her surprise, she had hardly mentioned his name, when Gwendolen began to speak almost enthusiastically about him.

“I was a long time getting to know Mr. Coryton,” she said, “and at first there is a thick crust of cynicism and reserve, which is not easy to penetrate, but I believe he is really a high-principled man, though perhaps overmuch given to pleasure.”

Violet raised her eyebrows an imperceptible millimetre and then dropped them again rapidly as a happy thought struck her. To get confidences one must give confidences,—whether or not they are true ones is a secondary consideration. *Do ut des* was her motto as well as Prince Bismarck’s.

So her face beamed with delight as she thanked Gwendolen for her warm praises of Coryton and gave her to understand, under a strict pledge of

secrecy, that she was more than half engaged to him. Then, striking while the iron was hottest, she began to speak flatteringly of Tyrconnel and asked half a dozen leading questions about him in rapid succession, while Gwendolen was still touched by the subtle compliment of making her the recipient of such a confidence so soon and was therefore more or less taken off her guard.

It was a delicately revised version of the old confidence trick and, before the men came in, Miss Tresillian had gathered that Gwendolen was over head and ears in love with Tyrconnel, that she had set herself the task of reclaiming him from bad ways and evil companions, considered herself in some sort his terrestrial guardian angel and meant to marry him in two or three years, if he proved that he could keep straight in the meanwhile. The chief mistake in her estimate of his character was that she had taken rather too seriously his present religious craze and assumed to be chronic

a phase, which is as necessary to the emotional development as distemper is to the canine; she underestimated the power which his love of excitement had to shatter his best resolutions; and, where he really had a strong will of his own, she only thought him obstinate.

By the time the men came in, Violet had ascertained all she wanted to know. Lady Giddy was singing a Bulgarian love song, with the refrain '*Ti si moia, moia, moia!*' (Thou art mine, mine, mine!) and, as Coryton came in, she sang a variation, using the word *moi* (mine) in the masculine and looking him full in the eyes. When she had explained the line to him, she said she should expect him to get her a new ribbon for her guitar in return for the compliment.

"Will you let me destroy all those you have there, and provide you with a complete set of white ones?"

"Ugh! why white ones?"

“Because they are the symbol of innocence.”

“And would contrast so well with me.”

“You are incorrigible, Lady Giddy, it is hopeless to try to pay you compliments.”

“Well, will you give me one white ribbon to add to my collection?”

“No. It must be all in all or not at all,” he replied, folding his arms dramatically.

“You are a very ambitious boy,” she said with a pleased look, and began to strike up “*Se tu fosse per me 'na chitarra*” with a distinctly naughty look in her eyes, that nearly made Violet explode as she caught sight of it.

“Well, I think it is time for us to be putting our cloaks on,” said Mrs. de Courcy Miles, emerging suddenly from her sanctuary and bearing down upon Lady Giddy with scant ceremony. “It is past ten o’clock and the carriages have been round some time”—they were only four-wheel cabs, but that didn’t matter. Most of Mrs. de Courcy Miles’s geese

were swans. "One doesn't care to be too early at these sort of things," she went on explanatorily, "but we must be there before the Duchess of Puffeballe arrives."—This for the benefit of Lady Giddy.—"If we didn't know her so well it would be different. Gwendolen dear, the Duchess told you when you met her at Magdalene Lodge she would be there, didn't she?"

"Yes," said Gwendolen, flushing a little at the exhibition of snobbery, "I believe I told you so before, Aunt."

"And I am sure *I* have been told so several times," said Lady Giddy with a spice of malice, gathering up her train.

A minute or two later they were all packed in the cabs, trundling along to the Guildhall.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST TRINITY BALL.

When Love is kind,
Cheerful and free
Love's sure to find
Welcome from me.—TOM MOORE.

“ You haven’t asked me for a dance, Mr. Coryton,” whispered Lady Giddy as they met in the vestibule at the top of the red-carpeted stairs which lead to the Cambridge Guildhall. They were waiting for Mrs. de Courcy Miles, whose toilet apparently required a good many finishing touches in the cloak-room.

“ I never dance,” he answered languidly. “ Why

should one? I am like the first Lord Holland, I never do anything which someone else can do for me and I never do to-day what I can put off until to-morrow. But you will sit out a dance with me and let me take you in to supper, won't you?"

" You do not deserve it, for I am sure you can dance if you like. It is only affectation. In town they say no one dances now but the very young men and the very old ones. But I hardly expected to find that at Cambridge."

" The men who *can* dance are generally to be found standing against the wall. That will be my *rôle* to-night," laughed Coryton.

" As a mural decoration I suppose, you conceited boy," retorted Lady Giddy with a flash of her fan. " But here comes our hostess—pinned up at last."

Mrs. de Courcy Miles gathered her party around her and sailed up to the top of the room. A valse

was just over as they entered the ball-room, so they had a clear space and were the observed of all observers. Mrs. de Courcy Miles was supremely happy. She had the two prettiest girls in the room in tow and some of the smartest men. Her appearance created quite a sensation. They had come in good time, not too soon. The Duchess had not arrived—in point of fact she had never intended to come.

Mrs. Miles put up her lorgnettes and surveyed the motley crowd.

“A good deal of imported material, my dear,” she remarked to Lady Giddy. “These balls are always rather mixed. You must not judge of Cambridge society from what you see here. It is much more select, and much dowdier.”

“There is a good deal of dowdiness here to-night,” retorted Lady Giddy. “Good gracious! who *are* those extraordinary creatures bowing to you now? I never saw such gowns in my life. Do look—one

of them has a high dress close to her chin and no sleeves, the other has sleeves, and, well—no dress to speak of! Oh! this is very amusing!.... Tell me, who is that object yonder with a sort of fender on her head, and flowers growing out of the middle."

"Some town person, I believe," rejoined Mrs. Miles with ineffable scorn, "the wife of a solicitor, I think. I wonder how she managed to get here? Ah! there is Mrs. Bellamy—I thought there could be no mistaking that old brocade. And there are Belinda and Ceraminta with all the boys round them as usual.... No, Mr. Sainsbury I really cannot dance yet. I have to talk to such lots of people. What would everyone say? But I will give you one later on if that will do. Shall we say number fourteen? Very well What a ravishing valse this is. Dan Godfrey's Band of course... how well they are playing"

"Where is Miss Haviland?" inquired Pimlico

at this juncture, in an injured tone. “ I hope she’s goin’ to dance with me.”

Pimlico did not care much about Gwendolen. She had opinions, he did not care for women with opinions. He never listened to them. “ Why listen to a woman’s drivel? ” he said to himself, with good humoured contempt—it didn’t much matter what they thought, or didn’t think. But Gwendolen was a ‘good-looking filly and could step out well,’ and just now he felt in a dancing mood.

“ I’m sure she will be delighted,” gushed Mrs. Miles.

After all, Lord Pimlico was the Marquis of Southwark’s son—a much greater peer than Lord Baltin-glass of Blarney, with an enormous rent-roll and a pedigree which was not invented by Burke.

“ Ah! here is Gwendolen! ” she exclaimed. For at that moment her niece, who had been valsing with Tyrconnel, came to a standstill near them.

"Gwendolen, dearest", she said suavely, but in the tones of 'She-who-must-be-obeyed', "Lord Pimlico wishes you to give him a dance."

Pimlico scribbled his initials on Gwendolen's programme, opposite the next dance, and then surrendered her to her partner again.

"You needn't have given him a dance," grumbled Tyrconnel as they revolved round the room again, "I wanted you to keep them all for me. You know I did."

"My Aunt wished me to do so," replied Gwendolen in her precise manner, "and he is one of our party. I could hardly have refused without being rude; though I confess I do not like Lord Pimlico. He seems to have no ideas beyond stables and kennels. And yet he is a great friend of yours. How I wish that you—"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Tyrconnel, with a foreboding of what was coming, and dreading a lecture. "I will do all you wish if you will only

keep me all the rest of your dances. Promise me."

" You can have one of the extras if you like," rejoined Gwendolen demurely.

" One! Oh! Gwen, do you think I should be content with one?" he cried.

" You have no right to call me 'Gwen', and I wish you wouldn't hold me so tightly," rejoined that young lady, " I can scarcely breathe. Really there is no occasion to do so. I am not going to break away from you—until the next dance at any rate."

She was not given to banter, but it was absolutely necessary to check this threatened flood of sentiment, or Tyrconnel would be on his knees before her in the ball-room ere the evening was over.

" I suppose you prefer Pim's style," rejoined Tyrconnel jealously, loosening his hold a little all the same. " He holds his partner at an arm's length and runs round her—he can't steer a bit."

“He tries his best,” said Gwendolen dispassionately.

Meanwhile Pimlico, who had as keen an eye for female beauty as for the points of a horse, had forgotten all about Gwendolen, and was dancing with Violet, who looked very pretty in a maize-coloured dress. She had got up a little flirtation with him, and even ventured upon one of those killing looks of hers, half timid, wholly admiring, with a little blush at the end—one of those looks which she had never known to fail.

But it did not seem to penetrate Pimlico’s thick hide. She was good to look at, but she knew nothing about either horses or dogs. She pretended to do so, but he soon found her out. He never met a woman who did, except his cousin Theodora Gargoyle. She wasn’t here—worse luck.

“Well, how have you been getting on with Pim?” asked Coryton of Violet an hour or so later.

They were sitting after supper in a little room under the gallery. There was a rowdy polka going on in the ball-room. Echoes of it penetrated even here. They were quite alone.

“Oh! I don’t know,” rejoined Violet with a shrug of her shoulders. She had not forgiven Pimlico for his slowness in responding to her advances. “He is an awful bore, you know, and can’t dance a bit. I have lost half my dress and most of my hairpins, but I kept my temper. I danced with him twice--once more than Gwendolen,” she added with a spice of malice.

“Oh! Gwendolen is a sort of correct young person, who would never dance more than once with the same partner unless she were engaged to him.”

“Then she must be engaged to Pigeon—for they danced nearly all the supper extras together,” rejoined Violet.

“She is, or very near it,” said Coryton, who had reasons of his own for making the statement

just now. "I am afraid your influence over him has sadly waned since the old Harrow days, Vixie."

"Oh! propinquity is everything with that sort of person," she said flippantly. "The thing one calls love is purely physical with him, and he needs the physical presence of the loved one to feed the flame, otherwise it dies of starvation. Shut me up with him in a country house for a week, and he would be at my feet again."

"Well, his love for the fair Gwendolen is hardly likely to die of starvation, rather from an attack of indigestion, I should think. But, Vixie, I didn't bring you here to talk about them—but about ourselves—don't you think it is about time we came to some little understanding with one another. We really ought to go into partnership."

Violet looked at him steadily for a moment or two. Then she broke forth into a little rippling laugh.

"You absurd boy, I shouldn't dream of marrying

you, if that's what you mean. One doesn't marry nowadays to cement a friendship, *mais pour mieux déraliser*. As to the partnership, I don't say no. You see we could carry that on far better if we were each married to someone else."

"But, Vixie," he protested, "I really couldn't bear to think of you married to someone else. I always pose as caring for no one but myself. But you must know that no one is really without all natural affection. I am awfully fond of you. I'd do anything for you—within limits. We'd get on awfully well together. We both have the same views of life, the same ideas of success, the same contempt for humdrum people. Hang it all! What an awful time you would have tied up for life with a fellow like Pim, say, or even a dull, amiable person, like the Pigeon, whom you could twist round your little finger! How you would hate him for every remark he made! How you would curse every scruple of his, which interfered with your plans!"

He was close to her, his speaking eyes looking into hers. If his passion was not real, it was at least admirably feigned. She met his gaze with the same amused smile, but a little flush had crept over her face.

“Nonsense,” she said, “he would amuse me. I should study his character. It would be such excellent practice, learning not to mind the stupid things he said and discovering the quickest ways to overcome his scruples. He would be a living lay-figure, always at hand for experiments in the art of wheedling fools.”

“I don’t agree with you,” he answered, “not a bit. I think a fool is an incessant drag on a clever spouse, even though the blood of a Howard and the riches of Golconda are there to temper the folly. You and I together, Vixie, could conquer the world.”

“Very well, then,” she said, giving him her hand, “henceforth we will be partners. You have useful friends, a fair amount of money, I suppose,”—

Coryton smiled—“and no affections to impede you. We will go into partnership. But we won’t talk of marriage just yet,—at any rate till we see if we can do better elsewhere.”

And so they left it—with a sort of half understanding on either side. He saw it was useless to press her further just then and with quick tact abandoned sentiment for other topics of a personal, but unsentimental nature.

Coryton and Violet sat out most of the dances the rest of the evening—or rather the rest of the morning, for the Cambridge May-week balls go on long after the sun has risen.

They did not find it monotonous, for they had much to talk about. Violet was not a young woman greatly given to dancing with younger sons or callow undergraduates, and she threw over her partners without mercy.

Later on they went down again and made a second excellent supper, and thoroughly enjoyed

the bottle of extra good champagne which Coryton induced Hubert Sainsbury, the Hon. Secretary of the Ball Committee, to produce out of the special dozen which he put aside for himself and his particular pals.

It was nearly six o'clock before Mrs. de Courcy Miles could collect her party and take her departure. Coryton saw Violet into the carriage and gave her hand a friendly squeeze at parting.

As the cab drove off he turned and saw Tyrconnel standing in the sunshine, pressing furtively to his lips a long white glove. It was Gwendolen's. A gleam of contempt flickered over Coryton's lips. Then he slapped the love-sick swain on the back with a ringing laugh.

“ You must be very hungry, my good Pigeon,” he cried, “ to nibble away at that indigestible morsel. Come back to the supper-room, and have some hot coffee with me instead. It's all right—you needn't hesitate. I've got a pass for the steward's breakfast . . . Come! ”

CHAPTER IX.

A UNION DEBATE.

Genius, when young, is divine.

—B. DISRAELI.

THE debate at the Union was largely attended. The motion before the House was one of confidence in the Government—a well-worn subject, which cropped up for debate at least once in every term. But on this occasion a certain element of reality infused itself into the proceedings from the fact that the vote of confidence was to be moved by the son of a prominent member of the Ministry.

In the gallery, which ran round three sides of

the spacious, ill-shaped hall, there was a goodly assemblage of women--chiefly from Girton and Newnham, interspersed with a sprinkling of strangers, who had dropped in to kill an hour by looking down upon the bloodless fray.

The brown leather seats on the floor of the House were filled with undergraduates--those on the 'Noe' side being perhaps the more crowded; and every seat on the Committee benches was occupied by youths who took notes and conferred at intervals among themselves with a portentous gravity, worthy of the front benches of the House of Commons.

The President's chair--a hideous gallows-like erection perched on a shabbily-carpeted dais--was on this particular occasion filled by a large heavy-looking individual, who wore a B.A. gown over his irreproachable evening dress.

The debate was opened excellently well by the aforesaid son of the Minister, who wore an eye-

glass, cultivated an ultra ministerial manner, and alluded at intervals to “sources of information not generally open to members of the House”.

It was a smart speech and admirably delivered, though certain parts of it smelt overmuch of the lamp. He sat down amid a hubbub of applause.

“The motion is opposed by Mr. Walpole Coryton of Trinity College,” announced the President in deep oracular tones, which he fondly fancied resembled those of the Speaker of the House of Commons, “I call upon the honourable Member to address the House.”

Then he sat down, settled his collar and resumed the sphinx-like air, proper to one on whom the eyes of Europe are fixed.

Coryton rose to reply. By this time the House was thronged. The opposer of a motion always has the best of it in this respect, for, by the time he is on his legs, the constant dropping in of men on their way from Hall has ceased.

He began with a curious hesitancy of manner, which he always affected at full-dress debates. There was not the least occasion for it, for he knew exactly what he was going to say, but it suggested a diffidence he did not feel, and it made his audience very tolerant—for was it not a subtle compliment to their superiority? He paid the usual compliment to the ‘able speech of the honourable Opener’ and lamented the disadvantages at which he was placed, without those ‘sources of information’ to which the mover of the motion had so frequently alluded,—a touch of sarcasm which his audience was quick to appreciate. Then he gradually warmed to his work and his words came quick and clear. There was nothing particularly new in what he said, but he had a new way of saying it and he gave point to his sentences with quiet little barbs of satire, which rankled after they had sped home. His peroration was delightful—the loftiest sentiments delivered in a voice that quivered

with an emotion manufactured for the occasion.

The ringing applause, which greeted the end of his speech, told him that he had scored one more mark, and a long one, towards the goal.

The opener and opposer of the motion having been disposed of, the debate became general. Gaverigan made a short and pointed speech from the high Tory standpoint, full of winged words, which irritated his own party rather more than they did his opponents. He began by taking Coryton to task for having spoken of the 'Liberal Government'.

"Sir," he exclaimed, throwing his head back and arranging his hands on his hips, "the tottering ministry, which now afflicteth England, is neither Liberal nor a Government. It is a rotten body standing on two legs of unequal length, whereof the shorter and the more enfeebled has been blighted by the cruel, lying, canting traditions of Whiggery, and whereof the longer, with its pinchbeck trappings

from Birmingham, seems in a terrible hurry to slither the whole cursed corpse down to its proper destination—into the jaws of Hell."

A shout of delight came from the Opposition, but Gaverigan turned quickly upon them. "It is not for the weak-kneed humbugs, who aspire to be the heirs and successors of the old Tory party of pious memory," he said scornfully; "it is not for the organized hypocrisy that I see around me to taunt others with the inconsistency, with the imbecility, with the dishonesty that are their own watchwords and rules of policy. The old Tory Party is dead!" he went on in declamatory tones, "as dead as the great God Pan. But its spirit of chivalry, its spirit of stainless honour still lives—the spirit that charged with Prince Rupert, that flashed from the sword of Sarsfield, that triumphed at Gladsmuir; and some day, in God's good time, that spirit may reanimate this besotted nation, scatter before its face the fools who are called

Conservatives and the knaves who manufacture new constitutions in Birmingham, drive out usurping dynasties, and make Right and Might for once coincident and supreme."

Half a dozen youths were on their feet putting points of order to the stolid President, who sat blinking stupidly in the chair.

"I call upon the honourable Member to withdraw the word 'besotted,'" he said after a long pause, feeling he must satisfy somebody.

"By all means," said Gaverigan without rising, and then resumed a conversation he had begun with Mauresk, who had just entered.

Everybody laughed and the President sat down discomfited to blink anew, wondering why everybody laughed.

The next speaker was an overgrown King's man, named Drake, whom we had already met at the 'Apostles'. He was of course 'frightfully clever' and had evidently adopted that theory of

his own abilities himself. His speech was thick and hesitating, though bearing trace of elaborate preparation. Every now and then he broke out into a ripple of harsh laughter, preceded by a vacant snigger. For a long time no one could understand the why or wherefore of these grimaces, but, as the listeners got used to the process, they discovered that it was intended as an alarm to herald a joke, due precisely two minutes later. These jokes were so abstruse that hardly any one could grasp their meaning. A few mutual admirers, however, who had been favoured with a rehearsal of the jokes at the 'Chit-Chat', were seated all round the speaker and supplied the desired applause.

Then followed 'a poor Indian, whose untutored mind' impelled him to make sad havoc of the Queen's English.

At last a man in a Judeian gown, who had been sitting well-displayed on the front Opposition bench, sprang up to address the House. He wore

white spats over patent-leather shoes, a loud waist-coat, an enormous button-hole and a large amount of jewellery. His hair was redolent of the oil of Macassar, and the gaudy silk pocket-handkerchief which he waved at intervals reeked of 'Jockey Club'. His arising was the signal for a general exodus. He heeded it not, but went on in strident, loud-throated tones which had earned for him at the Union the nickname of 'sounding brass', just as his general style had caused him to be known in other circles as 'the Bounder King'. His utterance was volcanic, and his style of oratory obviously modelled on that of Sir Cincinnatus Spread eagle, M.P. for the pocket borough of Squint.

The youthful orator waved his arms, indulged in vain repetitions as the heathen do, incoherently denounced the 'Arch-Anarch of Midlothian' and all his works, opined that before long the "hell-dogs of rapine and civil war would be let loose over the land," and finally announced his intention as a

Volunteer officer of fighting them to the death—quite after his model's famous Yeomanry speech. In his peroration he spoke vaguely of a Nemesis pursuing the Government in the shape of “letters of blood on a river of fire,” and then having run off the end of his notes—pulled up abruptly and sat down. No one took his diatribes seriously except himself. To his ears the ironical cheers which greeted his sudden collapse were sweeter than music, and a smile flitted over his ill-favoured countenance as he thought of how delighted his Aunt Mary Ann—Dame President of the Kensington-beyond-Jordan Habitation of the Primrose League—would be when she read the report of her nephew's speech in the *Cambridge Review*.

Coryton came across him a little later in the lobby outside the debating Hall, recording his vote with a great flourish in the book kept for that purpose. In accordance with his rule, Coryton went up and congratulated him warmly on his

speech—that sort of thing cost so little and brought in so much.

“Thanks,” said Plantagenet-Unkels—for such was the individual’s name, throwing down his pen with a complacent air, “I flatter myself it wasn’t bad either, I let ’em have it pretty hot, didn’t I?—By the way, are you going now?”

“I think so—the debate is sure to be adjourned.”

“Then come back to my rooms, will you? I have got a few fellows dropping in at ten o’clock. Will you come?”

“I shall be delighted,” accepted Coryton and, so saying, followed his companion through the swing-gate, across the roadway to Saint Jude’s.

“There are two or three matters I want to have a chat about with you. I think you and I should pull together, old chap,” said Unkels with odious familiarity, as they walked along. “There’s the Coningsby Club, for instance, I suppose you know

we are trying to get our next President—Rupert Cameron—to come up later?"

"No," replied Coryton, pricking up his ears. He knew the Coningsby of course, and belonged to it. It was the undergraduate Tory Club. But hitherto it had done nothing but give a dreary dinner to the University Representatives and some other old fossils once in two years—in the days, that is, when the Cambridge University Representatives were old fossils, and not Tory Democrats as now. If there was a chance of Lord Rupert Cameron coming, it would be worth while looking it up.

"It is perfectly true," said Unkels with an important air, "I am trying to get Sir Cincinnatus to work it for us. Nothing like having a friend at Court, you know, and then the annual election for the Vice-Presidency and Committee are at the end of term. But we will talk of that later on. Come in, old chap, and hang up your gown—here we are.

CHAPTER X.

THE BOUNDER KING.

Sit crooked, speak straight.

—ARAB PROVERB.

UNKELS' rooms were in the new buildings of Saint Jude's across the Bridge of Belshazzar. They were gorgeously furnished in execrable taste—*carte blanche* having been given to the upholsterer in Sidney Street, so far as money was concerned. They were very much too crowded. Photographs were scattered all about, sundry Royalties, actresses, Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle, and other eminent politicians were interspersed with photographs of

Unkels in every conceivable pose—Unkels as Lieutenant of the University Volunteers, Unkels as Richelieu in the last dramatic performance of the 'Footlights', Unkels in 'Spurs' (*i.e.* cap and gown), Unkels surrounded by his pals, and so on.

The mural decorations were broken here and there by Japanese paper fans, tin shields with University and college Arms painted thereon, a Primrose League Warrant emblazoned in purple and gold—a device of the Bible and the Crown—and a quantity of cheap pottery from an emporium in the Petty Cury.

The Bounder King had made preparations for his guests. On a side table there were biscuits, pâté-de-foie-gras sandwiches, cake, oranges, walnuts, and sundry other fruits, cigars, cigarettes, port, sherry, whisky, and coffee—all execrable. In an ice pail close by were half a dozen bottles of still worse champagne.

"There is going to be quite an orgy in a small

way," thought Coryton to himself as he surveyed these preparations. "I wonder what I am in for."

Whatever qualifications his host might lack, it was evident—obtrusively evident—that he possessed the very needful one of ready cash. The Bounder King belonged to the monied set of Saint Jude's—and to those who know, this fact in itself will be sufficient to explain what manner of man he was.

The 'men of fashion', whom he imitated at a distance, took a delight in snubbing, in pilling, in ignoring him and his ilk whenever they came in their way. But Unkels persevered all the same. He had the hide of a rhinoceros and intense vanity. If he could not be a minnow among Tritons, he would at least be a Triton among minnows.

The guests began to drop in, and soon the room was full. Coryton knew some of them by sight. There was the man, for instance, who drove a four-in-hand to Newmarket and, failing to get a

desirable companion, had to console himself with the society of a tipster and a tout; there was the man who tried to dine himself into the Pitt Club—and failed; there was the man who rode excellently well, yet who always was pilled for the Polo Club. Then there were several smaller fry, Judeians for the most part, but not exclusively so.

Of these Coryton recognized two as frequent speakers at the Union. One a short, thick-set youth, with a bullet head, protruding eyes, and a face like an ill-boiled suet pudding in which the blotches did duty for the plums. His name was Oates and he hailed from 'Pots'. The other reminded one somewhat of Uriah Heep. He possessed a writhing body, damp hands, an unclean collar, and crooked legs. He was generally understood to represent the Church interest at the Union; his name was Bedlam and he came from a place known as 'Catts'.

They all appreciated the good cheer. There

was much popping of corks and chinking of glasses, and much introducing of "Coryton of Trinity" by the host. At first some were inclined to view the new importation with suspicion, but his manner was such an admirable mixture of deference and affability that this frost soon wore off. The Bounder King looked on approvingly, now and then taking one aside and speaking with him in a low voice. So might Guy Fawkes have whispered at a revel of his conspirators.

But this was only a prelude to the real business of the evening. Plantagenet-Unkels had no objection to letting these worthies smoke his Jersey cigars, and drink his gooseberry-and-petroleum. He was rather a hospitable fellow in a way, and liked to see them do it—only he expected something in return. What that was he now proceeded to explain, standing with his back to the fire.

"You fellows," he said, rather thickly, "at least most of you, know for what purpose we are met

here to-night; it is to consider the situation—the political situation. The situation is grave."

Coryton looked profoundly impressed and murmured "Hear, hear!"

"The situation is unparalleled in the history of—of—"

"The nation," suggested Oates of 'Pots'.

"The Union," Unkels went on, loftily ignoring the interruption. "For what is the situation?"

Everyone looked expectant, the crushed Oates blinked his little red eyes.

"It is this. There is a fellow putting up for the Presidency of the Union who is known as a Revolutionist, who would"—here he looked to the photograph of Sir Cincinnatus Spreadeagle for inspiration,—"hurl down the august—hiccup—Monarch from her Throne, scatter the Lords to the four winds of Heaven, and break the Empire in pieces. But that," he went on, lowering his voice, "is not all; he would—hiccup—pull down our venerable

Church, and root out—hiccup—religion from the land, for,—it has come to my ears to-day,—he is an **ATHEIST!!** ”

There was a little stir in the room. Oates of ‘Pots’ snorted and quaffed again at the Hamburg sherry. Bedlam of ‘Catts’ uttered a pious ejaculation of horror.

“ You mean the man who opened the debate to-night? ” put in a mild man, whose sense of fairness was revolted, “ but he goes to chapel sometimes, I have seen him there. ”

Coryton smiled but said nothing.

“ All the worse, ” thundered the orator inconsequently. There was a general burst of applause and the mild man collapsed. “ Down with him, I say, down with the traitor! ”

There was another hush, somebody cracked a walnut, and Bedlam made a furtive dab at the pâté-de-foie-gras sandwiches. They did not get much pâté-de-foie-gras at ‘Catts’.

“Excellent, but how do you propose to do it?” said Coryton presently, in his most dulcet tones.

“How do I propose to do it!” repeated Unkels, swerving round towards him. “Why, by standing for the presidency myself, of course. There is no other man. Von Raggedbach is no good.”

Von Raggedbach was the other official candidate, whose wish it was to stand in the ordinary course of events.

“Why, he’s only half-English for one thing, and then he’s a Papist for another,” continued the orator. “Shall we leave the cause of this great Empire to be defended by an alien and a Papist? No, I say, no!”

“No!” sonorously echoed Oates of ‘Pots’, who was by way of being an Orangeman.

“Therefore I shall stand as a Protestant and a Briton—I do not go for the Committee or any minor office. I go slap-dash at the Presidency itself. You know my motto: *Aut Cæsar aut nullus.*”

“And a very admirable motto too,” said Coryton, as he flicked off the ash from his cigarette; “You will take steps to prevent its being *nullus*, of course.”

The Bounder King winked and looked knowingly round the room. There was a little laugh. Bedlam writhed and Oates snorted.

“We are taking precautions—we have taken them,” he replied producing a roll of papers from his pocket. “These are our little lists. All our plans are laid out, you see. Jude’s is with us to a man. Oates has promised the ‘Pots’ vote, and Bedlam that of ‘Catts’.”

“Is that extensive?” queried Coryton blandly.

“It is a dozen solid,” put in Bedlam in a curious falsetto voice, which suggested that he was trying to intone and could not quite succeed. “Then there is the vote of all the Colleges east of St. Benet’s, to say nothing of the others. You see,” he said, writhing, “we exchange views at our

debating societies, so I know exactly how things stand."

Oates squirmed.

"The 'Pots' vote is solid to a man," he said, determined not to be left out of it. "I am President of the College Debating Society and I ought to know."

Unkels looked at Coryton with a satisfied air.

"You see," he said, "we are not riding for a fall. Every college has been worked, except Kings', and they always plump for their own men. Quince," he went on, indicating a youth whom Coryton vaguely remembered having seen, when he once attended a meeting of the 'Magpie and Stump,' "is working part of Trinity. The point is, Coryton, will you undertake the other part and give us your support?"

"My dear fellow," said Coryton with emotion, "with all my heart."

He was beginning to see light through the dark-

ness. Why should he not win over the 'bounder' support for his own candidature. That and Pimlico's nomination would make him irresistible. As for Plantagenet-Unkels, he had no more chance of winning than the Man in the Moon. "But," thought Coryton, "that's his look-out."

Aloud he said, "Anything that it is in my power to do, shall be done."

"That's right," exclaimed Unkels. "I thought I knew my man. Then we'll put you on our lists for the Vice-Presidency, and you'll begin to whip up your men. I'll lead and you follow."

"One would be proud to follow such a leader," said Coryton blandly, taking the lists which were given him, with the full intention of putting them on the fire as soon as he got home.

The conversation now became general. Everyone was very friendly. There were more drinks, and a little music: 'Wrap me up in my tarpaulin jacket,' 'Sweethearts and wives,' and

so forth. Bedlam took advantage of the confusion to finish off the remainder of the sandwiches. Oates, when his host was not looking, pocketed some of his Jersey cigars. After a while they began to drop off one by one. Coryton lingered.

“ You were speaking about the Coningsby before we came in,” he said presently to Unkels, “ have you a little plan for that also?”

“ Oh, yes, my dear chap,” cried Unkels effusively. He was well on in his cups now and inclined to be very communicative and offensively affectionate. “ But that is a very simple affair. Funnie-Ffoulkes, you know, is resigning the Vice-Presidency at the end of the term. Well, I don’t propose to have a don there again. I propose to elect myself—ha-ha! ”

Here he winked and gave Coryton a friendly dig in the ribs.

“ That is very simple,” said Coryton, “ and alto-

gether an admirable arrangement. May one ask how you propose to do it?"

"Oh! easily enough," chuckled the Bounder King. "At the general meeting all the fellows I know will come round and vote for me. I shall give 'em a dinner first. The other members never take the trouble to turn up at a general meeting at all, you know. It's all a question of canvass. We shall have it all our own way."

"Not if I know it," thought Coryton to himself. "Two can play at that little game. All a question of canvass, is it? I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that phrase."

Aloud he said, "The Coningsby Meeting isn't until the Union Election is over, is it?"

"One week after. We shall get the other out of the way first."

"Excellent," thought Coryton, "I shall win my Union Election through this bounder's support and then I can dish him at the Coningsby."

“ Well, I must be turning in now,” he said, “ I wish you all success; you may depend on me. Good-night.”

“ Yes,” Coryton mused as he walked along Trinity Street, deserted now save by a few belated undergraduates, “ I have done a very good thing to-night by going to that bounder’s rooms—made my Union election sure and discovered a short cut to becoming Vice-President of the Coningsby. And yet it was ten chances to one that I went to his rooms at all. Surely my luck has delivered mine enemies into my hands. Why did he show his hand so? With Rupert Cameron coming I must make sure of the Coningsby at any cost. But it will require careful working. I must think.”

He halted for a moment at the corner of King’s Parade, beneath the house from whose windows Frith painted the first scene of his ‘Road to Ruin’. The great block of the University Church loomed up before him, almost glorified out of its square commonplace in the silvery moonlight. As he stood

there, Oates and Bedlam passed him with an effusive “Good-night.”

“Those worms are to be bought over, if I know anything of human nature,” he said to himself, as he looked after them, following the current of his thoughts. “But do I? The beginning of wisdom is the knowledge of oneself—and the end of it for the matter of that. One is never so near being a fool as when one thinks oneself wise, and I have been thinking myself very wise lately Still, if things go as I hope—Bah! I will not hope. Hope is a snare. I will act. Blessed is he that hopeth for nothing, for he shall not be disappointed. That is the only beatitude I believe in.”

Then he turned in, and slept the sleep of the just.

The term sped by and Coryton matured his plans. On the surface he did little enough beyond inducing every now and then a batch of his boon com-

panions to join the Coningsby Club. This they did willingly enough, for the subscription was a small one—all the more willingly because in some vague way they understood that by doing so they would help to dish the Bounder King.

The Union Election came and went. It all turned out exactly as Coryton had expected—or rather as he had planned. He romped in for the office he desired and the result of the contest for the Presidency—around which most of the interest centred—was Marshall first, Von Raggedbach second, and Unkels nowhere. Unkels cursed both loud and deep and gnashed his teeth in impotent rage. But he consoled himself with the thought that he was at least sure of the Coningsby. Coryton smiled blandly upon him and said nothing. They met at Philippi, and, within two days of the Union election, Coryton became also the Vice-President of the University Coningsby Club, with the visit of Lord Rupert Cameron in prospect.

Now the rest of the acts of the Bounder King and all that he did, how he blustered and swore and protested that he had been tricked and betrayed, and vowed a vengeance that never fell, are they not chronicled in the annals of Bounderdom?

CHAPTER XI.

ELLE ET LUI.

And I'll give my heart to my lady's keeping,
And ever her strength on mine shall lean,
And the stars shall fall and the angels be weeping,
Ere I cease to love her,—my Queen, my Queen!

—OLD SONG.

ONE afternoon, after a ride to Linton, Tyrconnel happened to look in at Mrs. Croft's pretty house on the Newnham Backs, and there he came across Mrs. de Courcy Miles and Gwendolen. It was with a half hope of meeting the latter that he had come, albeit he knew that she was not much given to 'five o'clocking,' that favourite pastime of Cambridge ladies. He did not get much opportunity of talking

to her, as she was deeply interested in a new scheme which Mr. Fannie-Ffoulkes was propounding to her with regard to the spiritual necessities of gyps and bedmakers.

“I do assure you, my dear Miss Haviland,” the little cleric said, striking an attitude and smiting his knees together after the manner of a mediæval Saint in a stained glass window, “that the condition of these poor people is sadly neglected. The means of grace are all around them, yet their state is one of spiritual starvation. It is to this that I directly attribute the grasping spirit, and the misconception of the laws of *meum* and *tuum*, which are so rife among them. Now take the case of Mrs. Bumble, who is the bedmaker on my staircase at St. Bridget’s——”

“You have told me all about that before,” said Gwendolen, nipping the story in the bud. This inconvenient truthfulness was a habit of hers. “It is your scheme of reformation I am interested

in—not Mrs. Bumble. How do you propose to work it?"

Funnie-Ffoulkes proceeded to unfold his plans, whilst Tyrconnel hovered around with a moody brow, trying in vain to get in a word with Gwendolen edgeways. But how could he do so when the talk ran on such an uncongenial topic as that of the spiritual destitution of bedmakers and gyps? Seeing how matters stood, the ever-alert Mrs. de Courcy Miles, after a vain endeavour to detach Gwendolen, rose to take her leave. Her niece had perforce to follow suit. As they were going out of the room Mrs. Miles squeezed Tyrconnel's hand.

"Dear Mr. Tyrconnel," she murmured, "I wonder if you would care to come and dine with us this evening? Quite *en famille*—there will be only just ourselves. If you are not better engaged, we shall be so charmed to see you."

"I could not be better engaged," he said, giving her a grateful glance, "I should like it of all things."

“Very well,” she said briskly; “We shall meet later, so I will only say *au revoir*. Dinner at eight, you know.”

Then she hurried home to tell the cook to put on an extra entrée, and the Professor to bring forth a bottle of his cherished '47 port from the cellar. None knew better than Mrs. de Courcy Miles the influence a good dinner has in bringing a man to the point.

The dinner passed off very pleasantly. There was a delightful suggestion of home, Tyrconnel thought, about this cosy red-curtained room, with the little round table drawn near the fire, the bright-hued flowers and fruit, the gleaming glass and sparkling silver. The *menu* was a very short one, but each item excellent, and the wine irreproachable. The Professor could not quite understand why his choice Heidsieck and '47 Port should be produced for the benefit of an undergraduate, an ordinary specimen of a class which he was inclined

to look upon as specially created for the annoyance of dons and tutors. But with the fear of his sister before his eyes he possessed his soul in peace, and said nothing. Now and then it was true he would make a restive remark, which Mrs. de Courcy Miles was careful to tone down, otherwise she too said little, only throwing in a word now and then when needed. Her policy was to let the young people do most of the talking.

They certainly did it remarkably well. It was astonishing how excellently they got on together and how much they had to talk about. There were no differences of opinion to-night; they seemed to look on all things in common.

Gwendolen was one of those girls who shine best in their own homes. In general society she was apt to be a little cold and constrained, the atmosphere of artificiality jarred upon her; people said she lacked the *aplomb* of a girl, who has done her two or three seasons, and perhaps she did.

But to-night there was no constraint. Unconscious of her aunt's wiles, she rippled on, full of natural, innocent gaiety, and Tyrconnel, feasting his eyes upon her across the table, felt more in love than ever. Mrs. de Courcy Miles and the Professor might have been a couple of puppets, so utterly oblivious did he become of their existence.

Puppet No. 1, however, who noted all things, smiled to herself approvingly. But there was one thing to be guarded against, it would never do to leave her guest alone with Puppet No. 2, or the spell might be broken. The Professor did not shine in the half hour after dinner and she knew—none better—the amount of physical exertion involved in bawling into his deaf ear.

So when dessert was over and the time had arrived for the ladies, under normal conditions, to withdraw, she said airily,

“ We will have our coffee here to-night, I think, Gwendolen, and all go into the drawing-room

together. You see, Mr. Tyrconnel, we are treating you as quite one of ourselves. James likes me so much to sit with him a little while after dinner. He would quite miss it if I didn't."

Poor James, whose ear had caught this last remark, opened his eyes and said nothing, though this was news indeed. Few were the smiles his sister vouchsafed him in their home life. She telegraphed him an almost imperceptible frown and, sipping her coffee, chattered on coquettishly:

"And you must have your cigarette just the same, mustn't he, Gwendolen? I wouldn't for worlds deprive a man of the delights of his after-dinner cigarette. The Professor never smokes, but we *love* it."

"If you are sure you won't mind," hesitated Tyrconnel, taking out his case.

"Not at all, provided you give me one too," and she reached out her hand for the silver case. "Ah!" she sighed, puffing the blue smoke with

careless grace, “ how it reminds me of dear, *dear* India ! ”

But her graces were all lost on Tyrconnel. If she had smoked a short, black clay he would not have noticed it. His eyes were all for Gwendolen. She looked so fair and sweet and pure with a bunch knot of lilies-of-the-valley in her white dress. She was always beautiful, but never had she seemed to him so yielding, so gracious, so near to him as she did to-night.

Nor had she been. She loved this youth. In spite of all his faults she loved him, and her girl’s heart, speaking within her, told her so. She instinctively heard love’s divine accent here, and she yielded to its spell. With all her prejudices, with all her cut and dried notions of right and wrong, she was but a girl after all—and she loved. Later, perchance, the disillusion might come, the old rigid principles reassert themselves. At present they were dormant, drugged asleep with love’s

potion. She saw all things through its rosy mist.

Presently, when the Professor was half asleep in his chair and the decanter of port, which oscillated between him and Tyrconnel, had grown beautifully less, Mrs. Miles, having finished her coffee and cigarette, proposed a move to the drawing-room.

“ All except you, dear James,” she said to the Professor. “ You really must finish those notes for to-morrow’s lecture. So go to your study, like a good dear man, and I will come and help you presently. Duty before pleasure, you see, Mr. Tyrconnel,” she added playfully as the ‘good dear man’ went off meekly to the room he was pleased to designate his study, instead of snoring over the *Times* in the comfortable arm-chair by the drawing-room fire as was his wont.

Mrs. de Courcy Miles accompanied the young people to the drawing-room and fixed Gwendolen down to the piano to sing Gounod’s song ‘The Worker.’

“Such a grand, beautiful song,” the good lady gushed to Tyrconnel, “and Gwendolen sings it like an angel. I could listen for ever.”

Yet before the first verse was over, she murmured something unintelligible about “having to help the dear Professor,” and, stealthily extracting *Un Crime d’Amour* from her work-basket, slipped off to enjoy it by the bedroom fire. Mrs. de Courcy Miles knew the value of a little music.

“If everything is not settled by the time I go back I shall cease to believe in myself,” she said as she opened her book, kicked off her shoes and put her feet up comfortably on the fender.

Meanwhile the unconscious Gwendolen sang on, her hands moving slowly over the ivory keys, her voice rising and falling. The shaded light of the standard lamp just behind her fell on her head like a glory. She might have served for a study of St. Cecilia.

So Tyrconnel thought as he came closer to her,

and sat down on the low ottoman by her side. Mrs. de Courcy Miles's drawing-room was full of cosy corners, but there was none cosier than this little retreat by the piano, framed off by a Japanese screen, and two or three palms.

The song ceased and Gwendolen's hands fell idle on her lap. She swerved round a little and met Tyrconnel's eyes. Before the ardour in them, her own gaze drooped and fell. There was a moment's embarrassment.

Then she said, turning nervously over the leaves of the song,

“It is a grand conception, a noble idea. The toiler's work done—after death, victory; after conflict, rest; after struggle, peace. It is the thought of this alone which can reconcile one's idea of a merciful God with the suffering and anguish which He permits to come upon His creatures here below.”

“Yes,” said Tyrconnel vaguely, as he caught

the look of spiritualized ardour in the girl's face. Gwendolen in these moods seemed to drift further away from him.

"What you say is very right—you are always right, Gwen, but it is of ourselves I would like to talk just now."

"Of ourselves," she said with a dawning blush—"What of ourselves?"

He came a little nearer, his lips trembling, his eyes bright and eager.

"Gwen," he said brokenly. "I love you—you must know that. No, hear me out," he protested as she was about to speak. "I am not worthy of you, I know—I am weak where you are strong,—but I do wish to live something better than the mere pleasure-seeking, self-indulgent life, with which you seem to credit me—and with you I could do it—only with you, for you are my ideal of all that is sweetest and purest and best. You are my good angel, Gwen. I love you. Can you love me?"

She bent a little towards him as though swayed by the passion of his pleading. The fragrance of the lilies at her breast smote upon his sense. In another moment it seemed she would have been in his arms. But a sudden wave of maiden coyness swept over her and she drew back.

“I—I—do not know,” she faltered, “you must give me time.”

“Not know?” he cried, reproachfully. “Oh! Gwen, *I* know that I love you. Time! Have I not watched and waited—waited ever since I first saw you, more than two years ago? I cannot wait longer. I cannot live without you. Perhaps you think I am not good enough. It is you alone who can make me better. I am not a religious man, I know. I know nothing of your creed, or your dogma. But I love you, Gwen.”

“My creed!” she said softly, looking at him with shining eyes, “My creed is a very simple one, Wilfrid, only that we should try to leave our little

corner of the world somewhat better than we found it."

"Then," he said impulsively, "let us try together." With you I can do all things, without you I can do nothing. Oh! Gwen, do not cast me off—try to love me a little."

"Dear one," she said tremulously, "I do love you—I have loved you all along. It is because I love you so that I wish you to be worthy of yourself—to break from the life you are leading now, to try and live a little less for yourself, a little more for others. Oh! Wilfrid, there is so much to be done—so few who will do it."

He caught her hand in his. "I will, I will," he vowed, "I will begin from to-night. For you I would do all things. Only trust me, only give yourself to me. The thought of your love will guard me against all temptation."

And he meant it at the time, every word—for the spell of her influence was strong upon him.

The light of a great love and joy broke over her face, she bowed her head upon his breast—“Dear one,” she whispered, “we will work together for God.”

CHAPTER XII.

COTTONHAM.

O youth ! thou often tearest thy wings
against the thorns of voluptuousness !

—VICTOR HUGO.

IT was a bright morning in mid-February ; one of those mornings when the crisp fresh air makes the blood tingle in the veins like new wine. The sporting portion of undergraduate Cambridge was up betimes, and the livery stables were doing a roaring trade. There was a great demand to-day and every old, rawboned, hard-mouthinged hack was sure to be hired. For it was the morning of

the Cottenham Meeting and everyone who could manage it was on the Chesterton road, either astride a horse or behind one.

There was 'Spot' Flanders, spanking along with his gay little pony; there was jovial Jack Jorkins from 'the little house in the park' astride his well-known Bucephalus, and there was von Raggedbach, greatly daring, who couldn't drive a bit, trying to drive tandem, a forbidden joy—all the more a joy because it was forbidden. There was all the horse-flesh and all the vehicles which the establishments of Porcheron and Saunders could produce. And last, but not least, there was Pimlico on the box of a festive four-in-hand, handling the ribbons in fine style.

Four or five other men were on the coach, including Gaverigan, who was eliciting the most dismal noises from a horn. In the boot there was a suggestive looking hamper and a case of champagne. On the box-seat was a young and extremely pretty girl,

with innocent china-blue eyes, a rosy pouting mouth, and fluffy golden hair blowing all around her baby face. She wore a neat little sealskin jacket and cap, and a bunch of fragrant Neapolitan violets nestled beneath her dainty chin. So fair, so confiding, looked she, one would have thought her a babe in the world's wiles.

But appearances are sometimes deceptive, and they were rarely more so than in the case of Miss Sally Popkins, professionally known as Effie de Vere. Sally had made her first appearance at Cambridge a few terms ago, travelling thither with a theatrical company who played *Frivolity* in the queer little theatre down St. Andrew's-Street. Sally played the part which Trixie Bellevoix once made famous. She could not sing a bit, but she danced to perfection and kicked up her little heels and wagged her golden head in such a roguish way that she took the place by storm. Pimlico booked the first row of stalls every night for a week, so

that he and his friends might ogle at their will.

Sally became the rage. She was an astute young person, despite her angel face; one of those who keep an eye on the main chance. No one knew better than Sally that favour is deceitful and beauty vain from the point of view of a permanent investment. So, like the busy bee, Sally improved the shining hour, and made the most of her opportunities. She made many pleasant acquaintances during those trips to Alma Mater. She was now visiting Cambridge for a few days in connection with some theatrical business, and residing for the nonce in rooms down the Chesterton Road, just without the ken of Proctors and Bull-dogs. Pimlico, who was one of the most devoted of her swains, had called for her on his way to Cottenham that morning. So here she was, sparkling and laughing and dimpling and prattling, as they drove through the muddy lanes in the February sunshine to the outlying village where the meeting was to be held.

It was a glorious morning for the time of year, and the sun shone brightly. They found the course in capital order and betraying no signs of frost. If it rode a little heavy in places, that was not to be wondered at in those low-lying meadows but, taking it all round, it was a first-rate winter ground and as good a give-and-take steeple-chase country as one could wish to see.

Pimlico turned into the paddock in fine style and drew up along-side the railing, where a few traps had already taken up a position. Stand arrangements there were none, unless it was the railing aforesaid, along which divers vehicles stood in a row, chiefly tax-carts, gigs, and sundry conveyances of more or less obsolete appearance. This centre served as a betting ring, where a few Cambridge "bookies" were already gathered together. Hanging on to their skirts was that nondescript crowd which a race-meeting, however small, is sure to attract: Sellers of racecards, purveyors

of drink or food—baked potatoes, monster sandwiches, lobster claws, and oranges—and one very dismal nigger minstrel.

There were few of those hard professional faces one knows so well at recognized race-meetings, but there were a good many ruddy farmers and jovial country squires, who had driven over from the surrounding villages to see the 'young-uns' ride, and there was a whole batch of undergraduates trying to look as sporting as possible, with field-glasses and wondrously built coats. Spofforth had ridden over with his sisters from Fulbourn—buxom hearty girls with a wholesome out-of-door air about them, who sat their horses like Diana and stared at Miss Popkins and certain other damsels of the same feather who were present, as though they were some species of newly-discovered vermin.

Leaving Sally perched upon the box, like a young woman in a circus procession, Pimlico strode off to a neighbouring tent. A few of these tents had

been erected here and there, one for the Stewards, another for the Clerk of the Scales, and so forth. A good many of the amateur jockeys, their bright-hued jackets covered up in Sandown coats, were standing about. At Cottenham no one is supposed to ride but Members of the University and a similar restriction applies to the owners of the horses entered.

The start had been announced for twelve o'clock, but it was 12.15 before the flag fell. Only three could be mustered for the first race, the Magdalene Steeple Chase Plate—namely, Pimlico's Potted Meat, Williams's Little Demon, and Forbes's Poppæa. Potted Meat cut out the work, and was followed at intervals by Little Demon and Poppæa, until two fences from home, when Little Demon deprived Potted Meat of the command. The top-weight suddenly and mysteriously seemed to collapse, and so Little Demon won easily by four lengths; Poppæa second, Potted Meat a bad third. It was

a rare haul for the book-makers, for the betting had been 5 to 1 on Potted Meat, 5 to 2 against Poppaea, and 10 to 1 against the winner.

There were curses loud and deep around Pimlico's drag, and sundry ominous mutterings as to 'pulling.' But as it was known that Pimlico had laid money on his horse, there was very little definitely said. The only one who seemed to have benefited was the astute Coryton who had won largely. Perhaps a little confabulation he had with Pimlico had something to do with it. Anyway that worthy's curses on his ill-luck seemed a little over-done.

"Hi,—help me down!" cried Sally irascibly, from her coign of vantage, "I'm tired of being stuck up here like the fairy queen in a transformation scene."

She was nearer losing her temper than ever she had been in her life: she had lost, or rather she had not won anything—for Sally never paid her debts—on the race. The tip of her nose was get-

ting quite blue with the cold, and the Misses Spofforth had directed towards her sundry scathing glances, which, in her present dejected condition, she felt quite unable to return.

“Get me a glass of curaçoa and a biscuit, do,” she said, “I feel quite faint. Well, some people *have* luck,” she added, enviously, as she watched Coryton pocketing his shekels. “Who would have thought of Potted Meat going to pieces like that? I shall be quite stony if this goes on.”

“Women and horses are notoriously uncertain,” rejoined Coryton, and he buttoned up a fat pocket-book with the unmoved air of a professional.

“Well, I never!” exclaimed Sally indignantly; and she tossed off her glass of curaçoa. Then, as the softening influence of the liqueur began to make itself felt, she smiled on him again.

“Now, there’s a good chap, put a pony on the next winner for me,” she said coaxingly, seeing that the hint oblique was of no use. “Pim is

going to put on something for me—but he's always wrong, I want a good tip."

"I'll give you one," said Coryton with a short laugh. "Do you see the Pigeon yonder?" he went on, indicating the spot where Tyrconnel was standing near Miss Spofforth's horse. "That's the straightest tip I can give you."

"But he always fights so shy of me," rejoined Sally, nibbling the edge of her race-card, "and to-day he has not been near me at all."

"I'll tell you how to bring him round. Come with me," he said confidentially, taking her elbow in his hand and leading her aside. "We'll talk it over together."

A match was coming off just then, in which Coryton had no possible interest. They are always tame work, these Cottenham matches. Mere processions, for the most part, or put-up jobs with which the bookmakers will have nothing to do. Under cover of this particular one, Coryton and

Sally had an animated little dialogue, which apparently ended quite satisfactorily.

Gwendolen's influence must be checked at all hazards, and Coryton knew—or thought he knew—that the only way to check a woman's influence over a man is by playing off another woman upon him. He had not studied Tyrconnel's character in vain. There were certain passions which ran strong in him, and, if Sally could only play upon them sufficiently, his good resolves would melt like snow before the sun. So he put matters in train, and trusting her woman's wit to do the rest, hurried off to the next race in which he was keenly interested.

The Cottenham Hurdle Race was one of the big events of the meeting. Some half a dozen were trying conclusions. Among them Coryton's Vixie, (rose and primrose), ridden by Williams, was soon installed favourite. Tyrconnel's Cutlet, (green and white), ridden by himself, found plenty

of backers, and so too did Wilmot's Rosbif (orange and blue). The running was first made by Cutlet, but about half distance Rosbif joined him, and they went on side by side. The lot kept pretty close company until some five furlongs from home, when Vixie, who until now had been laying back, came creeping up—and took second place. From that point it was an exciting race. Cutlet, Vixie and Rosbif seemed almost of a cluster at the last flight of hurdles and only after a very pretty struggle did Vixie—who, strange to say, was seen over 'sticks' now for the first time—win by a neck, Rosbif beating Cutlet by a head for the second place.

After this came lunch, everyone in the best of spirits, Pimlico beaming, Coryton radiant, Forbes facetious, Sally brimming over with good-humour. Only Tyrconnel, who joined the party when lunch was half over, was a little down on his luck—as well he might be, for he had backed his horse

heavily and lost. However, under the genial influence of Pimlico's champagne, with which Coryton plied him freely, he soon recovered his spirits, or rather he alternated between boisterous outbursts of merriment and sudden fits of gloom.

Sally, who had somehow contrived to be next to him, prattled on in her artless way to a running accompaniment of the clatter of knives and forks and the popping of corks. She did not talk to Tyrconnel very much, but once, when no one was looking, she laid her little hand on his, and whispered how sorry, how *very* sorry she was that Cutlet had lost. Looking down into her up-turned eyes, he began to think that she was really a very nice, good-natured little thing—and felt a sort of half pity, half liking, for her steal over him. No doubt the wine had something to do with it.

Coryton, who noted everything, noted this, and smiled.

"Very good, Sally! first-rate! keep it up," he whispered in an aside, when lunch was over, and Tyrconnel, flushed and smoking a very big cigar, was standing a little way off making entries in his pocket-book.

Sally looked knowingly at him as he hurried off to the tent, for the next race was about to begin. It was the Fulbourn Steeple Chase, which had been instituted by Spofforth some three or four years before.

Tyreconnel was not riding in this, so he went across the meadow to see the water-jump,—the famous Cottenham water-jump, at which nearly everyone comes to grief. Though fair horsemen in their way, the riders exhibited some very questionable jockeyship here, floundering over in hopeless style. Wilmot came an awful cropper, but Pimlico's horse cleared it somehow, thundering over in a way that made the earth shake, and managed in the straggling finish to win by a neck.

As Tyrconnel was going back across the paddock, he heard a little cry, and turning, saw Sally leaning against a gate, the corner of her baby mouth drooping, her face drawn with pain.

“What is it? Can I do anything for you?” he asked, with concern.

“I have twisted my ankle, I think,” she said, “I wanted to see the water-jump and was hurrying and my foot caught in one of these,” pointing to the rough clumps of coarse grass which were dotted around, “and—oh! it does hurt so, Mr. Tyrconnel!” And she lifted her face appealingly to his.

“Poor little thing!” he said compassionately. “Whatever induced you to go running about these meadows all by yourself? Why didn’t you tell me you wanted to see the jump, and I would have given you a lift across.”

“I—I didn’t like to,” said Sally, looking at him with those great blue eyes of hers, “but I would

have liked to go with you very much," she added, hesitatingly, after a minute's pause. Then she looked down again.

"Well, you mustn't be standing here," said Tyrconnel, good-naturedly, not oblivious of the flattery suggested in that hesitating look. "Come, take hold of my arm, and see if we can get back to the coach. We will go very slowly."

Sally put her little hand on his rough coat-sleeve and limped along by his side.

"But I am keeping you—and you want to go away," she said after they had gone a little distance, pressing closer to his side nevertheless. "If it had not been for you I should have been left there all alone."

"Oh! Pim would have come after you," replied Tyrconnel unsympathetically, "and he would have done much better than I."

"Oh no," protested Sally, pouting a little, "not so well—not nearly so well. He is so rough."

Her hand on his arm tightened a little as she said it.

“ Well, you seem to get on with him very well, in spite of his roughness,” rejoined Tyrconnel bluntly. The wine was in his head somewhat, but he was very loyal and did not like the slighting tone in which Sally spoke of the absent.

She caught her breath a little—a half-sigh, half-sob, “ *I have* to get on with him,” she said in a low voice and then stood still.

Tyrconnel looked down on her in a puzzled way. The corners of her mouth were twitching tremulously, her eyes were swimming with unshed tears. It is a dangerous mood, that of beauty in distress!

“ What do you mean?” he asked, translating his thoughts into words.

Sally looked around. They were all alone in the wind-swept meadow. The shouting crowd yonder by [the betting-ring seemed very far off.

Some fine nerve quivered in her lip—she seemed at the point of tears.

“How can I tell you what I mean?” she said, “you would not believe me if I did. You think I have no feelings, I suppose—but I tell you I don’t care for Pim a bit—and I do care for somebody else—who never takes any notice of me at all—and I am tired of my life, and wish I had never been born.”

She burst into tears and buried her face on Tyrconnel’s shoulder.

He felt his pulses quicken a little as she pressed against him. It was only compassion, of course. He hardly grasped the meaning of her words. She was unhappy and tired of her life. Surely here was an instance in which he might do something to help an erring fellow-creature,—some of that good which Gwendolen was always telling him about. But Gwendolen with the soft low voice and sweet pure face seemed very distant just now as

the sobbing girl nestled against his shoulder. He could not bear up against a woman's tears.

"Poor little one," he said perplexedly, putting his arm round her in a protecting way, "don't cry, I will help you if I can."

Sally prisoned his hand in hers, and her sobbing ceased.

"You are very good," she said brokenly, "very good to me indeed—not like the others who think I'm made for nothing but to laugh and joke with. It's very hard," she continued brushing away a tear; "people always blame a girl."

There was a ring of sincerity in her voice. She stepped briskly out as she spoke. She seemed quite to have forgotten her lameness.

Her companion did not notice the sudden and miraculous recovery, he was so moved by her words, or rather by her tears, possibly too by the little hand which nestled so confidingly in his own. He pressed it in silent sympathy, trying to

think the while what he could say or do to comfort her. She was such a pretty, helpless, little thing. Suffering or sorrow always went straight to Tyrconnel's heart. He was as malleable as clay in the hands of a potter with a pretty woman. It was on this weakness Sally was trading now.

"I wish I could do something," he said again, half to himself—half to her. There was a vague idea in his mind of offering her money—but he had never given money to a woman. His men friends were in the habit of borrowing from him freely—at least they called it borrowing, though they never paid him back—but that was another thing. A sense of shyness held him back; and then he could not offer very much just now, for his losses that morning had been heavy. He did not know Sally or he would have had no such scruples, either about offering the money or as to the smallness of the amount. She was a veritable daughter of the horseleech so far as money was

concerned. But just now her thoughts were running on other things. She changed her tack.

“ Will you come to the dinner this evening? ” she said coyly, looking up at him, “ Pim’s Cottenham dinner—it is to be in my rooms—and if you come it will make it so pleasant for me. Do come,” she added coaxingly.

Tyrconnel hesitated. With the full flood of his good resolutions upon him, he had refused this dinner, meaning thereby to take the first step in the upward path which Gwendolen had pointed out to him. It was to be the beginning of the break with his old life. It had not cost him much of an effort to refuse, for he knew the dinner would be exactly like all the others he was in the habit of attending, and even those delights were apt to pall when one had too much of them.

But he had thought it a great sacrifice none the less, and was rather proud of his resolution in refusing Pimlico’s invitation. Gwendolen would

approve of that, he felt sure. She would certainly have approved of his resolution much more if she had known that Sally was to be there. But of that he did not think just now.

"I—I am afraid I can't," he said a little awkwardly. "I have told Pim I can't go—I've got another engagement."

Sally pouted and her lip began to tremble again.

"That is just it," she said with a sound of tears in her voice. "Men are all the same. They will do anything and everything—until you ask them—and then—they will do nothing. And it's such a little thing too. *Do* come."

The blue eyes were so beseeching. Her face was flushed with her pretty pleading. How could he refuse her? After all, it was such a little thing.

"I will come," he said a little unsteadily, pressing her hand to emphasize his words.

A gleam of triumph glistened in Sally's eyes. They were close to the betting-ring again now and

there was hardly time for her to do more than murmur her thanks before Pimlico came up and swept her off to the drag. There was only one more race and then they drove home through the chill grey of the February afternoon.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT HER FEET HE BOWED AND FELL.

Salvation should be very simple, since
it is so easy to damn oneself.

—ANON.

THE little house in the Chesterton Road was full of light and laughter. It was not a big party, only half a dozen or so, bosom chums of Pimlico--all the usual set was there.

Tyrconnel had come in spite of himself. He wavered a good deal when he got back from Cottenham. Had Gwendolen been in Cambridge she could have saved him, but she had gone away for a few days with Mrs. de Courcy Miles and he was

unable to while away the hour between the lights by strolling up to the house on Newnham Backs. So he put in a chapel instead.

It was a white chapel, for it was the vigil of some saint. The sober-minded, stately prayers, the chanting of the choir, the long lines of white-robed undergraduates thrown out in bold relief against the dark panelled walls, and far away in the richly carved stall, the grand, silver head of the Master—all these things appealed to Tyrconnel strangely and reminded him in some vague way of Gwendolen. As in all excitable, emotional natures, there was a certain devotional vein running through him.

When he came out of the chapel he had fully made up his mind not to go to Pimlico's dinner after all. But in his rooms he found Coryton ready, dressed and waiting for him,—Coryton, smooth, bland, and persuasive as ever, who seemed to think it the most natural thing in the world that he should go and pooh-poohed his excuses in an

airy manner. Tyrconnel yielded after a brief resistance and they went off together.

" You see we can slip away early," said Coryton confidentially, as they went along, " I don't feel inclined to make a bout of it to-night."

The other quite agreed.

But before the dinner was half through all thought of slipping away early had vanished from Tyrconnel's head. Sally's smiles and the genial influence born of a good dinner put matters in quite a different light. Everything was very well done, the table was decorated with roses and primroses, the colours of the winning horse, and the light was tempered by rose-hued shades. Everybody was in great form—no one more so than Sally. She wore a pretty pale pink dress, cut in a way which showed off her dainty neck and rounded arms to the best advantage. She had the passion for diamonds common to women of her class, and many little stars and brooches and clasps

adorned her bodice and twinkled amid the fluffy mists of her golden hair. Most of them were paste probably, but they passed muster very well, and served to give an added point to her sparkling beauty, and to enhance the brightness of her eyes. She was full of 'quips and cranks and wreathed smiles' and had an answer ready for everyone. But her attentions were chiefly reserved for Pimlico and Tyrconnel, between whom she sat.

As the dinner neared its end and Pimlico dipped deeper into his cups, Sally was able to give more attention to her other neighbour. She had already whispered to him how very, *very* good it was of him to come, accompanying her words with a squeeze of the hand under the table-cloth. And Tyrconnel, as he patted the little hand and looked into the candid depths of her child-like eyes, thought himself a fool for having wavered at all.

He lifted his glass and toasted her admiringly, he had done so several times before that evening.

(Everyone was toasting Sally.) When he put it down again, she stooped forward and touched it with her mouth, just where his lips had pressed the rim.

"I do that for good luck to you," she murmured softly, meeting his eyes. "I go away to-morrow and may not see you again. But I shall never forget you."

"Nor shall I forget you," replied Tyrconnel, whose blood was now slightly warmed by the enlivening wine, repaying her glance with interest. "You must tell me where I can find you."

"Alpha Cottage, Beta Road, St. John's Wood," rejoined Sally promptly, "and you will come to tea with me there one afternoon, won't you?—Here," she said taking the menu card, "I will write it down.... Now don't forget,—the very next time you are in town."

What Tyrconnel might have replied it is impossible to say, for at that moment their *tête-à-tête* was rudely interrupted by a rain of flowers from the

other side of the table. Miss Popkins returned the volley with interest and for the next few minutes confusion reigned supreme. It was the usual senseless "rag" in which Pimlico and his friends were wont to indulge at their convivial gatherings, and the presence of the lady seemed rather to egg them on than to restrain them. Sally snatched Tyrconnel's button-hole from his coat. He retaliated by robbing some of the flowers which nestled among the laces at her breast. Forbes was pelting Pimlico with bread, while Williams and Wilmot had found convenient missiles in the *marrons glacés*.

Wilmot sat down at the piano and began to thump out a "razzle-dazzle" polka. The table was pushed aside, a space quickly cleared and most of the party were soon careering around the room. Sally danced as much as she could, but after a time she subsided breathlessly into a chair, shrieking with laughter at the uncouth antics of Pimlico and the others. Coryton, who never exerted himself,

quietly turned Wilmot from the piano and, sitting down, commenced to play. Then Tyrconnel, flushed and excited with wine and overmuch revolving in a small space, came up and begged Sally for a dance. She consented instantly and round they went at a furious rate.

A few minutes later the music closed with a crash and Coryton jumped up from the piano.

“Come, Pim,” he cried, taking that individual, who had subsided into a semi-somnolent condition, by the arm, “let’s have a lemon squash to steady ourselves, and a game of cards before turning in. Come along, it’s nearly half-past eleven already, and it won’t do to be late to-night.”

Pimlico assented sleepily. So did the others, and gathered themselves around the table—all except Sally and Tyrconnel, who cried off.

“You come and talk to me,” she said affectionately, putting her hand on his arm, and leading him into one of those queer tent-like little erections,

which Cambridge upholsterers are so fond of rigging up in the corners of undergraduates' rooms. Sally's lodgings were not precisely undergraduates' rooms, but they boasted one of these little cosy corners all the same.

They sat down side by side in the semi-gloom. There was only one low seat, heaped up with billowy cushions, so they shared it together. Sally took a glass of green chartreuse; Tyrconnel took several. They gave alternate puffs at the same cigarette. The others were so much engrossed with their game that they were practically alone, free to whisper any soft nothings they might please.

But Tyrconnel, at least, had got past the stage of conversation. He was no St. Anthony to remain insensible to the witchery of this woman—only a headstrong youth with a slender stock of good resolutions, which were now melting away like snow before the sun. They were so near to one another, the perfume of her hair was in his nostrils,

the fumes of wine in his brain. A sensuous drowsiness stole over him, the scarlet mouth trembled close to his own, the little hands were in his. He bowed his head, and their lips met.

“ By Jove! You fellows, it’s half-past twelve,” cried Coryton suddenly throwing down his cards. “ This is the third night this week. We must be off—every one of us, or we shall be gated for the rest of the term. Come on, Pim ”—and he snatched up his cap and gown—“ I’ll race you as far as Magdalene.”

But that worthy, who was now in the quarrelsome stage, began to wrangle about his winnings. There was a general bustle and scrimmage until Coryton impatiently hurried him out into the darkness of the night, closely followed by the others.

* * * * *

“ Have you heard the news, Corry? ” cried Forbes,

bursting into Coryton's rooms about lunch-time next morning and discovering that youth half-dressed, in a cosy chair by the fire, with silver grill dishes, a half empty coffee-cup and all the other evidences of a late breakfast beside him.

"What news?" asked Coryton languidly, throwing a little patchouli-scented note upon the fire as he spoke.

"Why, about the Pigeon. He's in for it this time and no mistake. We clean forgot all about him last night. He's been gated before this term. The Dean is furious. He was hauled this morning for being out after twelve o'clock and could give no account of himself at all. There's to be a college meeting this afternoon and he'll be sent down for the rest of the term, as sure as a gun."

"Poor Pigeon!" said Coryton meditatively, as he watched the smoke curl upwards from his cigarette. "Well, we must pay for our little

pleasures sometimes you know. Have you seen him this morning? ”

“ Yes, I have just come from him. He’s awfully down about it, full of repentance and remorse and all that sort of thing.”

“ One is generally repentant when one is found out, and remorseful when one can’t do it again,” rejoined Coryton drily. “ I am amused to think how shocked the good Gwendolen will be! I would rather face a college meeting than her reproachful gaze. Wait a minute, until I put on my coat, and we will go round and comfort him.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRUMP CARD.

Man hat keinen Erfolg oder einen groszen. Und der grosze Erfolg gleicht oft einem verwirklichten Märchen-
traum.

—F. VON KAPFF-ESSENTHER.

LORD RUPERT CAMERON had accepted the presidency of the University Coningsby Club without quite realizing the small part which that institution played in the undergraduate world. His acceptance of that post conferred a momentary importance upon the club and helped to confer a more than momentary importance upon Walpole Coryton, its Vice-President

and local chief. The smart sets suddenly discovered its existence and thronged to join it, a rowdy dinner was instituted twice a term in connection with it, and a new batch of officers and committee was drafted in.

The latter event was a masterpiece of intrigue on Coryton's part. There had been the yearly election already referred to, when Unkels was put to confusion, with the result that Coryton had been elected Vice-President, Fannie-Ffoulkes Treasurer, Bedlam Honorary Secretary, and the Committee included Oates and many others of the same kidney. But halfway through the next term, Coryton summoned a general meeting of the Club and proposed a re-election of officers.

He had secured the assent of the 'old gang' by a profusion of promises: Plantagenet-Unkels had actually been persuaded to believe that he was to be Vice-President the term after next; Fannie-Ffoulkes was to be Vice-President very soon; Bedlam

was to be Vice-President next year and Treasurer as well as Secretary in the meantime; Oates was to be Secretary some time or other and new representatives of 'Catts,' King's, and 'Pots,' were to swamp the Committee.

Never had there been such reckless promising, not even at a county council election or before a critical division in the House of Commons. Half a dozen different people had been promised the same office and—such was their vanity and credulity—not one of them had a shadow of doubt about their election. Forbes and Pimlico gave a series of bounder dinner-parties, while Williams and Wilmot put up batches of impossible people for the Pitt Club and were the first to blackball them.

The result surpassed all expectation and at the general meeting not only was the requisite two-thirds majority forthcoming in favour of a re-election of officers, but even absolute unanimity. Then came the ballot, when the 'new gang,' by enormous

majorities, elected Coryton Vice-President, Forbes Treasurer, Pimlico and Gaverigan joint Honorary Secretaries. The Committee also consisted exclusively of the 'new gang.'

The 'old gang' were effectively dished and were only prevented from resigning in a body—which was precisely desired of them—by a sense of favours to come. They thought to start a club on their own account in Rose-crescent, but the numbers and energy of its founders did not suffice to attract attention in the University or distinguished visitors from outside. So they returned to their old haunts and made themselves a great nuisance, until Pimlico devised a series of practical jokes, which made the place unbearable for them. So they revenged themselves by coming to the smart dinner, given by the club at the Lion Hotel, and hooting Pimlico when he got up to propose the toast of 'The Ladies'.

The next intrigue concerned the entertainment

of Lord Rupert Cameron, Lord Southwark and the other guests who had come up to speak at a public dinner in the Guildhall. Plantagenet-Unkels had had the inviting of Lord Rupert and had taken the opportunity of entangling him in an invitation to lunch with him at Saint Jude's the day after the dinner. Coryton only heard of this at the eleventh hour, when he received an invitation 'to meet Lord Rupert' from Unkels, who had remembered that it would 'look funny' if the officers of the club were absent. Coryton pulled a long face when he read the note and decided that prompt action was imperative.

Accordingly, when Lord Rupert arrived at the station, Coryton arranged, by the diffusion of false information, that he and Forbes should be alone there to receive him and, as Lord Rupert got into the fly that had been chartered for him, Coryton said quietly.

" You were so kind as to hold out hopes that

you would come and lunch with me next Sunday."

Lord Rupert, who of course had not a notion who was who, acquiesced at once and Coryton slipped a card into his hand to remind him not only, as he said, of his address—but also of his name.

At the Guildhall dinner Lord Rupert told Coryton that he had received a note from a Mr. Unkels, recalling a promise to lunch with him and that he feared he would have to go there, but Coryton replied, with the calmest assurance possible, that he had arranged it all with Unkels and had invited him to meet Lord Rupert at luncheon. It seemed most natural that the Vice-President of the Club should be the entertainer and it never of course occurred to Lord Rupert not to accept the arrangement.

The dinner was a great success from everybody's point of view: from Lord Rupert's, for he delivered a rattling presidential address, which aroused much

controversy in the papers and ended by strengthening his precarious position in the conservative party; from Lord Southwark's, who replied for the House of Lords; from Coryton's, for many laudatory things were said about him by a small galaxy of statesmen; and even from Unkels's, for Coryton had the assurance to introduce him to Lord Rupert as 'one of the most ardent Tories in the University.'

Gaverigan, who wound up the toast-list with 'The health of the President,' was also gratified with some pointed compliments.

"I wish to mention the very great pleasure with which I heard the gentleman who proposed the toast, address a public meeting," said Lord Rupert, when he returned thanks; "he is a nephew of one of my best and oldest friends in the House of Commons, (I am sorry to say he belongs to the Liberal party), Mr. Holloway Pother. . . . Mr. Gaverigan has eschewed the avuncular heresies and walks steadfastly and lively in the true political faith."

The luncheon next day was also a great success, except from Mr. Unkels's point of view. That individual had ordered in enough provisions to stock a caravan and the tables groaned with gooseberry champagne and the sort of food which Unkels associated with luxury. He had sent forth invitations to the highways and hedges of the 'Varsity to compel men to come in 'to meet Lord Rupert Cameron.'

There they were, hungry and expectant, waiting. A quarter of an hour passed, half an hour, three quarters, yet still he came not. Their servile instincts wrestled with the cravings of the inner man and it was only when three o'clock struck that they gave up all hope and sat down, sulky and ravenous, to gobble up in silence the good things that had been provided for them.

Meanwhile a very pleasant party was discussing a simple, but well-chosen luncheon in Coryton's rooms on the King's-parade. Lord Rupert Cameron

and Lord Southwark sat on either side of the host. Mr. Toadey-Snaile, member for one of the county divisions, was at the other end of the table. Undergraduate Toryism was represented by Forbes, von Raggedbach, Gaverigan, Pimlico, Williams and Wilmot, while Austen Marshall came as the show undergraduate on the other side, Drake and Mac-Ronald under the mistaken impression that they would make brilliant conversation.

Lord Rupert told a number of House of Commons anecdotes, which Lord Southwark capped with experiences of the House of Lords. They fell to discussing the mannerisms of Disraeli in both places. Mr. Toadey-Snaile, who was a notorious liar, said he had once seen him so far gone, after he had been rather more than dining, that all he could do was to wave his arms and cry 'British Constitution!'

Lord Rupert thereupon gave a story about a bombastic speech made by Disraeli in a mellowed

condition being followed by a sneer from Mr. Gladstone about 'the sources from which the right hon. gentleman has evidently drawn his inspirations.'

"This," he added, "the House would not stand at all, but groaned in disapproval. The fact is, even in its most democratic intervals, there is no body of men so conservative in habits or so tenacious of tradition as the House of Commons. It has its own peculiar code of morals and, while very lenient towards a good old-fashioned vice, like drunkenness, will not stand anything approaching bad taste or bad faith. For instance, if a man is once detected trying to hocus the House with a garbled quotation, he will never be listened to again."

"How do you prepare your speeches, Lord Rupert?" asked Forbes suddenly, apropos of nothing in particular.

Everybody laughed.

"Forbes is a great authority on speechifying," put in Coryton parenthetically, "he once made an

oration in the market-place and compared the British Constitution to a sack of wheat."

"That's better than Cincinnatus Spreadeagle's comparison of it to a rocket, at any rate," put in Toadey-Snaile.

"When I first started making speeches, which, by the way, isn't so very long ago," Lord Rupert went on, "I used to write the whole thing out and learn it word for word. Now if I have time to jot down a few rough notes and think out what line I intend to pursue, I count myself lucky. Very often I have to make a speech straight away without any opportunity for preparation. It is all a matter of practice,—like playing the banjo."

"Talking of old Gladstone," said Toadey-Snaile,—nobody had been talking of the man for at least ten minutes, but that did not matter,—"Talking of old Gladstone, what's all this about his planting a tree at Newnham and somebody cutting it down in the night?"

“ Nobody knows,” returned Coryton; “ but the old man’s admirers are frantic. They have employed private detectives and threatened prosecutions for burglary. But all in vain. They say it was done by a Primrose dame among the Newnhamites.”

“ I believe you did it, Cameron,” laughed Lord Southwark, “ or, if you didn’t, it’s a very queer coincidence. Do you remember the Dean’s garden at Merton ?”

“ I should rather think I do.”

“ What was that ?” everybody asked.

“ Oh ! nothing much,” Lord Rupert returned, “ it was only my dean. I was always in hot water with the dons when I was at Oxford, but I had special difficulties with my dean, until he became quite unbearable. However, I found out that he had a mania for horticulture and treasured the contents of his strange little garden more than the apple of his eye. It had a horribly high wall, but I managed to scramble over one night, though I cut

my hand rather badly with some broken bottles at the top. You bet I wasn't long in turning the place into a wilderness. I would have given a fortune to see my dean's face next morning, when he looked out and found every pane of glass smashed and every growing thing uprooted. But I didn't pull down the Gladstone tree of liberty, 'pon my word."

"I am sure this is quite a new thing," remarked Lord Southwark sententiously, "having political clubs at the Universities. There was nothing like it in my day—at least not to this extent."

"It's a very good thing anyhow," returned Lord Rupert. "I wish I had gone in for politics when I was their age. But I'm afraid I used to think more of huntin' and racin' in those days than of the affairs of the nation."

"Huntin'!" grunted Toadey-Snaile, "there can't be much in the way of huntin' at Oxford. The Old Berkshire,—what?"

"Yes, the Old Berkshire," and Lord Rupert

laughed over a reminiscence; "a crusty old beggar we had for master, by Jove!" he went on. "Swore at me like a trooper once before the whole field, because he had run into me, as far as I could make out. However, I said nothing, but just bided my time, that is to say till the hunt dinner at the end of term. I was down to propose the toast of 'Sport' and I felt that the Lord had delivered mine enemy into my hand. 'I have always been fond of sport,' I said benevolently, 'sport of all kinds. I like huntin' and fishin' and shootin' and I take an interest in racin' and athletics. Moreover, when I can't get the higher forms of sport, I don't disdain humbler amusements, but find a certain enjoyment in ferretin', cock-fightin', or even,'—I wound up in my most lugubrious accents, 'if the worst comes to the worst, and there is absolutely nothin' else to be done,—a day with the Old Berkshire hounds!' Everybody said I had scored, and the old rascal never forgave me."

“I suppose your clubs here hold very advanced views?” Lord Southwark asked Coryton with bored politeness. He had heard all these anecdotes before.

“Very sound views,” Lord Rupert replied for him. “They have been supporters of mine ever since I formed the Tenth Party. This is quite a hot-bed of Tory-Democracy, I assure you.”

“Well, I’m very glad to hear it. It is a sign of the times and of happy augury for the future,” replied Lord Southwark, beaming on Pimlico, who was half asleep.

“The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity,” quoted Gaverigan with mock solemnity.

“I suppose so,—provided they are nourished upon Disraeli’s novels,” returned Lord Southwark in the same tone.

“Was Disraeli a Tory-Democrat?” Marshall asked MacRonald in a stage whisper.

“Undoubtedly,” interposed Lord Rupert, “he was the first Tory-Democrat.”

“ The antithesis, I suppose,” said Marshall quietly, “ of that other personage, who has been styled the first Whig ! ”

As soon as lunch was over, they adjourned to the rooms downstairs, where Lord Rupert sat in an armchair evolving countless anecdotes and smoking countless cigarettes. He had a long black amber holder, with his initials on it in blue garnets, and as soon as one cigarette was finished, he lighted another, consuming them very rapidly. The rest of the party sat around, watching him open-mouthed and drinking in all his narrations. They were all about himself, but that was a subject which interested his hearers. Drake and MacRonald, who had been imported as specimens of University wit, scarcely opened their mouths all the afternoon. They sat in a corner, stolidly smoking long cigars. Even Williams and Wilmot were more loquacious.

Lord Southwark went off with Pimlico to talk over his ‘little bills’ and Mr. Toadey-Snaile soon

discovered that he wanted to make some calls on sundry musty dons, but Lord Rupert remained on till nearly five, chatting away and taking great pains to be agreeable. When at last he tore himself away and Coryton came down with him to the door, he repeated his assurances of satisfaction and good-will.

“I think you spoke very well indeed last night,” he said kindly, as they parted. “You have a great gift of fluency and you arrange your arguments admirably. We must see if we can’t get you into the House presently. Come and see me when you are in town.”

It was Coryton’s last term at Cambridge and he felt that these last triumphs had appropriately wound up the long series of successes, which he owed to his own energies. Lord Southwark as well as Lord Rupert had expressed a desire to see him again, and he meant to take good care that neither should forget it. As he packed up to repair to

Lord Baltinglass' place, where Tyrconnel had been languishing ever since his banishment from Cambridge the previous term, he flattered himself that he had already got his foot on a rung of the political ladder and that was more than most young men had done before they went down from Cambridge.

The thought of his father came over him. Poor old chap! He had not much to thank him for, but he had at any rate received from him a legacy of good advice. People are apt to sneer at good advice and say it costs nothing. As well might they say that the hasty masterpiece of the artist or poet costs nothing. Good advice is the potted meat of experience. And Spencer Coryton gave his son good advice when he said, "Remember always that your best friend is yourself."

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